The International
Crosby Circle Presents

BING

Edited by
REG BRISTO

1982

No 64

She Looks After Bing's Grave Site

By LOREN LEDIN

One day each week, Marion Massey rises before dawn in her Woodland Hills home and begins a weekly ritual.

The white-haired mother of two gathers up her implements, including cleaning solutions and a gardening spade, and heads to the refrigerator to retrieve her stock of flowers. Inside, stored the day before for preservation, are as many as 12 vases full of carnations, daisies, lilacs and assorted floral arrangements.

Via San Diego Freeway

After lugging the load to her car, she heads down the San Diego Freeway to Culver City. Her destination is Holy Cross Cemetery and the grave of Bing Crosby.

For the past 4¼ years, Massey has visited Crosby's grave almost every week. She has skipped visits on just three occasions: twice while vacationing with relatives out of state and last year, on Crosby's birthday, when she attended the dedication ceremonies for a Bing Crosby memorial at Gonzaga University in Tacoma, Wash.

Her visits invariably require a full day, since she meticulously arranges flowers, cleans the markers and clears weeds from not only the grave of Crosby but that of his first wife, Wilma; mother, Catherine; father, Harry; and grandson, Brian. She does the same for actor Frank Lovejoy's grave.

Expenses for flowers and gasoline come solely from Massey's pockets and may well be "in the thousands" by now, she said.

This week's visit and decorations were special: The motif was St. Patrick's Day, with a large shamrock and other appropriate trappings for the man beloved for his renditions of Irish songs and portrayals of Irish characters.

She knew Crosby just slightly.

"He was very nice, very gentle," she said. "Everyone adored him and I'm just one of them."

Massey is in her late 50s, is married with two children and wears a gold medal, which commemorates Crosby, around her neck.

Somewhat shy, almost defensive when talking about her weekly pilgrimage, she said, "Don't ask me about time or how much I've spent. Bing gave happiness to so many people. I want to give some happiness to him. I'm sure he knows about this."

In 1946, while working as a receptionist at CBS in Hollywood, Massey met Crosby when he came in one day to use the studios. She encountered him a few more times at CBS and Columbia Pictures, where she subsequently worked.

"He was always so pleasant to everyone," she said. "He went out of his way to be nice to people. One couldn't help but be impressed by him."

Lifelong Devotion

Those chance meetings fueled a lifelong devotion to Crosby. She recalled being stunned when she learned of his death Oct. 14, 1977.

"I was driving to San Diego to visit a girlfriend when I heard the news on the radio that he had died of a heart attack while on a golf course in Spain," she said. "I remember crying out, 'Oh no!' I was shocked. I didn't know what to do. I finally decided to drive on to San Diego but I cried the whole way there. I don't know how I made it."

Though the funeral was closed to the public, Massey decided she would attend.

"I made up my mind that I would get into the cemetery and that was that," she said. "Nothing was going to stop me."

Massey originally decided she would visit the grave on the 14th of each month to leave flowers, but when she arrived at the burial site Nov. 14, 1977, discovered that the grave was bare.

"I was shocked that no one was leaving flowers," she said. "So I decided that I would start coming to the cemetery every week."

(A spokesman for the Crosby family noted that virtually all of Crosby's close survivors live in other cities: his widow in Hillsborough, son Harry in New York, son Nathaniel in Miami. The spokesman said the family members all visit Los Angeles several times a year, and each attends the grave. He said that other admirers besides Massey also attend the grave and leave flowers.)

Massey arrives at the cemetery in time for its opening at 8 a.m. She doesn't leave until 3 to 4 p.m. The flower arrangements are patterned and include different varieties and decorative leaves. Her attention to Lovejoy's grave, she said, is the result of his kindness when she worked at CBS.

Massey also sets up special decorations on holidays and personal occasions such as today.

Tree and Pipe

On Christmas, she brings a white Christmas tree to the grave and places a pipe, a familiar symbol of Crosby's, on the branches. This past yuletide season, she brought a tape machine and played a recording of Crosby's Christmas songs. At home, she has videotapes of nearly every film Crosby has ever made.

Massey said the only member of Crosby's family she has met is Robert, his brother. "He thanked me for keeping up the grave," she said.

Her own family understands her passion for Crosby, she said.

"My children gave me a large picture of Bing as a present," she said. "My husband likes him, but not as much as I do. Of course, not many people do. I don't care if they do or not. But they better not say anything bad about him."

Ledin is a local free-lance writer.

EDITORIAL

CHEERING - AND CHILLING?

We have put a question-mark after the heading; there is a chance we may find ourselves over-stating a case, a viewpoint. And that is something we try strenuously to avoid. There are no misgivings about the first word - Cheering! for it refers to the story you have just read on the previous page.

We will all be warmed and cheered by the devotion of Mary Massey in the care she is lavishing on Bing's grave; that there are scores, if not hundreds, of women in Britain who would undertake that loyal task in no way lessens Mary's labour of love. We are thousands of miles away, Mary is fairly close by - but there is absolutely no reason why she should undertake this time - and cost - demanding task. Except, of course, that Mary, like so many of us, would be appalled and saddened beyond measure if the grave of Bing Crosby was to lie untended and uncared-for.

We honour Mrs. Massey for what she is doing and offer herour warmest best wishes. Thanks to her, Bing's grave is tended and revered. She is doing something for which we can all feel glad - and gratified.

So, we turn to the story you have yet to read - on the following two pages. Small items did indeed appear in the press here in Britain regarding the auctioning off of Bing's possessions. Now you can read the official letter that was sent round the world, it seems, by the "Auctioneers & Appraisers" concerning the auction they had been commissioned to undertake by Mrs. Crosby. On the page following is a press story from Los Angeles enlarging on this surprising 'sale of the century'.

It must be conceded that the furniture, decorations, even the paintings, of no less than five homes did present a problem of practicability. Obviously such a mass of Bing's personal possessions and acquisitions needed some sorting out, even perhaps some disposal.

Yet, we felt a chill when we read: "This group of Crosby memorabilia consists of Bing's gold and platinum records....." Is there a member of the Circle who, having such items in his or her possession by some miracle, would even consider for a moment of disposing of them? By auction? No, not for a King's Ransom or any other fabulous sum that might be mentioned. As for"first-cut tapes and records" surely these, too, are beyond price?

These items at least should rightly belong to a trust, even a museum, Gonzaga University possibly - or, as we mentioned in the last issue of BING, some national institution. We can only reiterate how sad it is that no such institution exists to preserve such items of a monumental career such as Bing Crosby's.

You will note the final paragraph of Butterfield's letter - dated April 13 but reaching us three weeks later, regarding letting "your club members know of this important auction whose purpose (the grammar is their's, not ours) is to disperse these items to the fans to whom it will mean the most.....

We can only apologise to any members who would possibly have been in a position to fly off to the States for this heartbreak sale.

A LATER REPORT in the prestigious NEW YORK TIMES of Monday, April 19, 1982 contained some new items:

"A warehouse full of artifacts and memories from the life of Bing Crosby, and a simpler time in America, will be placed on the auction block next month.
His golf-clubs, shotguns and fishing rods, his costumes, trophies, records, letters, photographs, furniture and paintings from six homes, even the walls of his dressing-room from Paramount where he made the 'Road' pictures with Bob Hope, and thousands of other items will be sold....

'It took me 5 years to come to this decision,' Mrs. Crosby said. 'For a long time I didn't want to give things up, but then I decided you can't hang on to everything. I didn't want them to go to a museum. Museums are not really alive. I wanted the people who loved Bing to have some of his things.'

A family spokesman said that no estimate had been made of how much money the sale might bring, although he said that Mr. Crosby's collection of art alone was valued at several million dollars. Mrs. Crosby did not say what she would do with the proceeds from the sale.
For some who attend (the sale) it may provide a voyage back in time, 35 years or so ago when, it seemed, that all of America was humming tunes sung by Mr. Crosby such as WHITE CHRISTMAS, DON'T FENCE ME IN and SWINGIN' ON A STAR. From the time he burst into stardom in the early 30's until a few years before his death, perhaps no American entertainer enjoyed as much sustained popularity as Mr. Crosby. He not only sold millions of records and appeared in movies and on a popular radio show but was also a kind of national father figure....

MRS. CROSBY SAID THAT FAMILY MEMBERS HAD SORTED THRO' THE MEMORABILIA FOR THINGS THEY WANTED TO KEEP, BUT THERE WAS STILL MUCH LEFT TO BE SOLD.

Among them are thousands of old 78rpm records that her husband collected in the swing and jazz eras, as well as thousands of her husband's records and tape recordings, including SOME THAT WERE NOT RELEASED. 'The wine cellar,' she said, 'is filled with tapes, as well as some Prohibition whisky.'
'There are thousands of pictures from the very beginnings of his career,' Mrs. Crosby went on, 'his gold records, his ties - he had terrible taste in clothing - and I was amazed to find hundreds of handwritten letters that he then gave to the secretaries for typing!'
As the family sorted thro' the memorabilia, she said, 'there was lots of crying, lots of laughing....I am looking forward to the auction. I want it to be a celebration....'

Well, there you have it. True, some of the comments are anguishing... that there are so many recordings and tapes, most of them never released....and we yearn for such material. At least, Mrs. Crosby's comments in both stories give a tangible refutation to the miniscule shortcomings magnified into Mountains of Evil in a certain book which has, incidentally, seemed to have been a monumental flop.

As we well know, Bing was a 'hollow man' of tremendous substance!

May we dare hope that those who acquire these precious recordings as a result of the auction also acquire the rights to issue them. Any enterprising record producer should view the prospect with interest, even tho' we allow that Bing isn't the phenomenal commercial enterprise he once was.....

Butterfield's
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1244 Sutter Street • San Francisco, California 94109 • (415) 673-1362

The International Crosby Circle
Reg Bristo
7 Greenmeadow Close
Cwmbran, Gwent NP4 3NR Wales

April 13, 1982

Dear Mr. Bristo,

Butterfield and Butterfield have been appointed to auction the Estate of Bing Crosby on May 25, 26, and 27 at their San Francisco auction rooms.

While the sale will include important sessions of paintings, sculpture, furniture, silver, decorations, rugs, posters, pipes, jewelry and other items, there is also a large collection of Bing's personal belongings. This group of Crosby memorabilia consists of Bing's gold and platinum records, first cut tapes and records, assorted riding, golfing and fishing gear, numerous pictures and photographs with personal dedications, various honorary awards, medals and cups, and many other items.

The auction will be in four parts: 1) Paintings, on May 25 at 1PM and 7:30PM; 2) Memorabilia, on May 26 at 10AM; 3) Furniture and Decorations, on May 26 at 1PM and 7:30PM; 4) Jewelry, on May 27 at 1PM and 7:30PM. Catalogues are available for each part at $12 (post paid) except the memorabilia which is $8 (post paid). Catalogue requests will be handled on a first come first serve basis.

Please do let your club members know of this important auction whose purpose is to disperse these items to the fans to whom it will mean the most and who gave such support to Bing throughout the years.

Yours sincerely,

Peter Fairbanks

Peter M. Fairbanks
Senior Vice President

TELEX.NO. 910 372-2181 CALL BACK: BUTT FIELD

Entertainment

Kathryn Crosby to auction off Bing memorabilia

/ Wednesday, March 17, 1982

By Linda Deutsch
Associated Press

HOLLYWOOD — Nearly five years after Bing Crosby's death, his widow, Kathryn, was taking stock of the clutter of treasures that once filled their six homes when a friend suggested that "what you need is a garage sale."

And, in a more elegant manner, that is just what Mrs. Crosby will do next month when she puts up for auction thousands of pieces of furniture, art work, clothing, records and musical memorabilia which once belonged to Bing.

"I had to look around and realize that I was storing a great deal of furniture in my hallways and no two pieces matched," she explained.

"And it occurred to me there were many people who had a right to Bing's things — people who loved him many years before I met him."

Mrs. Crosby, who was known as actress Kathryn Grant when she made movies in the 1950s, spoke of her life without Bing and the memories which sustain her during a recent lunch at the Brown Derby restaurant. During the course of the luncheon, veteran waiters rushed to greet her and celebrity caricatures on the walls reminded her of times she and her husband shared there with famous friends.

"I signed my first contract here under a picture of Bing, whom I hadn't met yet," she recalled with a smile.

That was before her May-December marriage to the legendary crooner who already had children older than she, before they had three children of their own and a solid marriage which lasted 20 years until Crosby's death in 1977.

The still youthful and pretty Mrs. Crosby, who lives at the family home in Hillsborough and maintains another home in Mexico, has made the adjustment to widowhood and doubts she will ever marry again.

"I had the nicest marriage and I enjoyed it," she says. "I also enjoyed parenting. . .but I don't think I would be brave enough to start that all over again as Bing was when he had two families, two sets of childen."

It is implicit in her comments that marriage to a legend leaves no room for replacements. "Bing was such a decent, good man," she says with feeling. "There are so many people who loved him who know what a man he was."

She accepts her widowhood with good cheer, acknowledging the many blessings left.

"Life is good," she says. "I will not have the great peaks of romance and ecstacy I had when I was young. But I thank God that I will not have the agony either."

She takes pride in her children.

Nathaniel, 20, a student at the University of Miami, is emulating his father as a golfer and recently won the U.S. Amateur Open championship.

Harry Lillis Jr., 23, who inherited musical talent and also golfs, tried acting, toured with a London repertory company, but changed his mind and now studies business at Fordham University in New York.

Mary Frances, 22, married to songwriter Edmund Preston Lottimer, is a successful actress who appears regularly on TV and starred in "Dallas."

All three children had their choice of treasures they wanted to keep before the auction, Mrs. Crosby says, and special friends and fans were given gifts of memorabilia.

Friends such as Rosemary Clooney have said they will attend the auction May 25-27 at Butterfield and Butterfield auctioneers in San Francisco. A preview will be held in Los Angeles May 1 and 2.

***** 1903

1977 *****

-- BELOVED BY ALL --

********** BING **********

Organ of The International Crosby Circle.

No. 64 June 1982

Dedicated to the memory of a gentleman and an entertainer beyond compare.

Editor/Secretary: REG BRISTO, 7 Greenmeadow Close, CWMBRAN, GWENT, NP44 4PJ

Annual Subscription: £2.50 UK; European equivalent to £3.00 sterling; American/Canadian members 12 dollars airmail, 8 dollars surface mail. Australian members equivalent to £5.00 sterling for airmail, £4.00 for surface mail.

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KEEPING TRACK: Page 42.

The biggest talking point of this issue is, of course, the remarkable sale that has taken place of Bing's personal possessions. To say the least, Keith Richmond sums it up in his letter in this issue: "I view it with mixed feelings..." I think we all do. Especially as, according to reports, Bing's gold records as well as the platinum ones have been disposed of. There have been conflicting reports also as to the reason for the sale: One says the cash raised will be used on Bing's favourite charities. Another says the proceeds will go to Mrs. Crosby.

We could wish that, if a sale was desirable, it could have been held in Britain! Manifestly, this would not be possible. And anyone contemplating a trip to San Francisco for a memento would find it very, very expensive. Even if there had been adequate notice. We can only hope that these priceless Bing possessions will go to people who will appreciate their value - far above any intrinsic value as that must be.

On a different note, we are delighted that young Nathaniel has, at last, given the perfect, resounding, answer to those preposterous allegations, or insinuations, that some have found fit to make. Speaking of his golf success (at which, it seems, some have been sniping, saying 'he got lucky') Nathaniel said:

> "I wore a medallion my dad had made when he played in the Amateur in the 'Forties. I had it on for sentimental reasons.
> I'M GLAD IT WAS MENTIONED BECAUSE I'D LIKE EVERYONE TO KNOW HOW I FEEL ABOUT MY FATHER - HE WAS THE GREATEST DAD IN THE WORLD...."

Original Material (c) 1982.

COLOGNE CALLING

We get lots of letters, and they are always welcome. Theyprove - or a selection of them - prove a popular feature of BING. We don't use "star" letters, or BEST LETTER for all have their individual interest. But sometimes there turns up a letter which really delights us. We think you will enjoy the following, reproduced exactly as received - and congratulations to Katia for his English!

To
The International Crosby Circle
c/o Reg Bristo,
7 Greenmeadow Close,
Cumbrian, Monmouthshire NP4 3NR

Katia Franke
Robert-Blumstr.1
5000 Cologne 41
West- Germany.

Cologne, the 25.4.82

When I heared that there excists a Bing Crosby Club in Cumbrian, I was very glad, because I am interested to get all informations of the Crooner.

I am 19 years old and thankful for my father, who made me to one of Germanys biggest Crosby-fans. Even when I was 4 years old, I listened to Bings romantic voice and to his warmth and lightly swinging and it was the greatest for me to listen to his TOO-RA-LOO-RAL before I went to bed!

Now I begin to work in a radiocorporation in Germany and I have the plan to make a Bing-broadcast.

I am always very happy, when my friends discover their love for him when they hear his "boo-boo-boo". Unfortunately, our TV does not bring much films of Bing, but I saw some of him, for example: HIGH SOCIETY, MISSISSIPPI, HERE COMES THE GROOM and at last HOLIDAY INN in the cinema. It was not easy to find the splendit original soundtrack of this movie, but by chance I found it and I hear it almost everyday!

Phantastic, that this man with the soft baritone sings everything: pop-songs, songs from Ireland, Jazz and south sea songs and at least Christmas-songs. I dont know any other all-round songer, who could fascinate me more!

I have songs of Bing of every epoch, only the "Rhythm brothers" are missing. Are there recordings of Bing with them? I still have not found any. And what for a disc contains the songs "Mrs Jones" and "Cheepers Creepers"?

He captured my heart singing.

Now I would be very happy, when you would send me so much informations of Bing as possible, all about his life and his person and a register of his records.

I will thank you very much for it! And as Ken Barner said: BING CROSBY - DEAD? I DONT HAVE TO BELIEVE IF I DONT WANT TO.

Katia Franke.

Editor: Doesn't one just ache to help this youngster - who already shows he/she (that's my worry at the moment, which is it?) already has a fine grasp of Bing's work. I'm sure new UK correspondents would prove exciting.

PLEASE DON'T TALK ABOUT ME WHEN I'M GONE,

though our friendship ceases from now on...

AND IF YOU CAN'T SAY ANYTHING REAL NICE -
BEST NOT TALK AT ALL - THAT'S MY ADVICE!

Thus sang Bing happily with, among others, the Firehouse Five + Two; a whimsical song that has persisted t' 'o' the years. A song doubtless inspired by a chance remark heard by an"anywhere for inspiration" songwriter! Whimsical, light-hearted - yet thanks to contemporary principles among would-be or so-called authors, it can assume a less than light-hearted angle. As we have all found out, these people - and we don't mean just Bing and THE HOLLOW MAN but many other 'works' - now see it as laudable to wait until a personality is safely dead and unable to reply and attempt to tear down the images of that personality - images he or she may have earned and enjoyed for decades.

The whimsical song nevertheless contains a very valid human tenet: contained in the final two lines above!

CELLULOID CROSBY

Not another in THE HOLLOW MAN syndrome, but

KEITH PARKINSON

writing on interesting aspects of Bing's films.....

If THE GUINNESS BOOK OF FILM FACTS & FEATS is to be believed, then HIGH TOR has the distinction of being the first feature length television film, i.e. a movie made especially for television. Made in 1956, Bing starred with Julie Andrews, who was making her American TV debut - and has gone on record as saying what a charming and co-operative man Bing was to work with and of how he helped her. The story has Bing as an idealist refusing to sell HIGH TOR, one of the Palisades Beaks on the Hudson River, to property speculators. The film was networked coast-to-coast in the USA on March 10, 1956. It was shot in twelve days at a cost of $350,000. It was not highly regarded by the critics. The magazine 'Films in Review' commented:

'The commercials were a welcome relief.'

The Decca album of the 'film' is something of a collector's item - as many members are discovering. It did not enjoy high sales at the time of its release and it has never been reissued. Bing collectors vie with Julie Andrews devotees in tracking down rare copies which surface from time to time. Unless Japanese MCA reissue the disc expect to pay upwards of £50 for a clean copy.

Bing's other television film was DOCTOR COOK'S GARDEN about which I have written at some length previously. Like HIGH TOR it was networked coast-to-coast in the USA. ABC screened it on Monday, January 19, 1971 and it has subsequently been shewn by local TV stations. It was shewn in the mid-70's in the UK by several independant television networks. The reviewer in the magazine 'Cinefantastique' had this to say:

"A superior suspense drama which transcended its frightening premise to become a personal story which effectively explored the old theme: Do ends justify the means? In a rare dramatic appearance, Crosby proved how good he can be when a role demands something of him."

Briefly, the film's pedigree is as follows. The story was by Ira Levin, author of ROSEMARY'S BABY. Levin's Broadway stage production featured Keir Dullea and Burl Ives in the parts later taken by Frank Converse and Bing respectively. The play was a flop but producer Bob Markell saw it might have possibilities in a condensed version. So Art Wallace adapted the play and Paramount made it a 71-minute movie for TV.

Returning to the subject of 'firsts', the Hollywood premiere of EMPEROR WALTZ was the first film premiere to be televised. Actor Roland Culver appeared in a tuxedo and hat and explained to the assembled crowds and viewing audience that he wore a hat on such a warm evening at the insistence of Paramount. He then revealed why by doffing the hat and showing everyone his bald head. Until that time all his film appearances had found him wearing a toupee. A few minutes after Culver's revelation, Bing arrived in a hat. He was greeted with laughter and couldn't understand why. His

comment to the television interviewer was: "Must say I can't see the resemblance but maybe they took me for Bob Hope."

According to Culver, who was the only other principal player in addition to Bing and Joan Fontaine who went on location to the Canadian Rockies for the "Swiss Alps" location shooting, bad weather meant that during the first six weeks only about five minutes of film was in the can. In addition, director Billy Wilder had taken a series of back projection shots whenever the weather brightened so that action could be matched back at Paramounts Hollywood studio. Bing saw to it that the bad weather did not ruin his own enjoyment and a lot of time was spent on the golf course whilst the unit waited for the sun to shine.

During one of the film's elaborate ballroom scenes, two hundred and fifty couples in period dress were required to curtsey for over a minute when Emperor Franz Josef appeared. With their hoop skirts and ornate gowns the ladies found it difficult to keep their balance for such a long stretch whilst low on one knee. Several teetered from side to side and landed on the floor. Director Wilder ordered tiny camp chairs to be fitted inside each woman's costume so that they could actually sit whilst holding the long curtsey.

Bing's Beverly Hills house is glimpsed in the film because a tennis court setting could not be found which would blend with the film's 1901 period. Bing suggested his own court, and it had the added advantage of being fenced on only three sides, thus making camera set-ups much easier.

The part played in the film by Joan Fontaine was originally offered to Greta Garbo, who declined it along with all the other film offers she was receiving following her 'retirement'. Miss Fontaine was under contract to David O. Selsnick at the time. Selsnick loaned her to Paramount at a huge profit to himself, and EMPEROR WALTZ was used to terminate his contract with Miss Fontaine. Her fee from Selsnick was 75,000 dollars whilst his from Paramount was 225,000 dollars. Of Bing, Joan Fontaine said "Though he was pleasant to work with, I felt I scarcely knew him when the picture was finished. The results looked like it."

James Agee's review for 'The Nation' dated July 24, 1948, was marginally more enthusiastic than Bing's female co-star. Agee wrote:

> "At its best this semi-musical is amusing and well-shaped, because Charles Brackett and Billy Wilder have learned a fair amount from the comedies of Ernest Lubitsch. In general, it is reasonably good fun."

"Harvard Lampoon" included the film in its list of 1948's ten worst movies. Even so, it appeared in VARIETY'S list of annual money-makers in 7th position, with USA and Canadian rentals totalling 4-million dollars.

Editor: As always, from Keith, fascinating new slants on Bing's film career.

Across the page is an impression of Bing in his last movie-film role in STAGECOACH - originally, we believe, done by Ralph Harding to whom our acknowledgements.

It may be fair to describe this as a Disaster-film tho' it certainly was not intended to be so. There was nothing wrong with Bing's performance as the alcoholic doctor, but many believe the whole project to be ill-conceived - for many reasons. Among them, even younger people would have seen the endless repeats on British television of the original 1939 classic and comparisons were inevitable. And the original could be categorised as a classic - Tom Mitchell playing Bing's part was masterly and won an Oscar for it. Secondly, it was probably the first movie-film in which Bing never sang a note. Not even something over the 'credits', so from a musical point of view it reached rock-bottom, especially for those who only want to hear, and see, Bing singing. We think of Bing as essentially a musical performer. True, his role could not allow him to do such a light-hearted thing as sing! And, as he said so

Hon'ble Cowasji as the unbeaten umpire

many times, he had reached the age when he could be no romantic hero! Perhaps an inventive director could have contrived Bing - the drunken doctor was Irish - to sing a chorus of GALWAY BAY or TOO-RAL-LOO-RA-LOO RAL, even if it had been somewhat maudlin!

Another thing that militated against the second STAGECOACH being a roaring success was that it was made at a time when, here at least, cinemas were closing by the hundred weekly in the face of the Bingo (!) onslaught as well as that of television.

One can only speculate as to whether or not the film would have been more successful if the circumstances had been more normal, and there had been no original. The first STAGECOACH was so rich in top-flight characters such as Andy Devine and the superlative Donald Meek - both of whom could make a film - as well as the stars who, formidably, were John Wayne, Claire Trevor and Thomas Mitchell. Not that the re-make was short of talent with, in addition to Bing, Van Heflin, Robert Cummings, Red Buttons, Keenan Wynn, Stephanie Powers and others.

The film was seen again on British TV in April and as a result produced two-related letters which appeared in THE DAILY MIRROR of 4th May last. In one, the writer had spotted 'ornamental objects' on the tables in the saloon. These turned out to be snuff pots! The second letter, from a man in Basildon, Essex, asked how Bing got his name. The Mirror got it right, too!

We would like to express our thanks to so many members who endeavour to keep us up-to-date with things we might otherwise miss; both at home, and certainly in the US by members such as Mr. Justice Francis X. Smith, Ken Twiss of the Historical Society (& his colleagues) and Les Wilson of Pleaston, California. Their interest and assistance is really appreciated.

Dick Nettleton, of Faringdon, Oxon, for example, tells us he never expected to get any real information about Bing in his local paper - THE WILTS GAZETTE & HERALD but he was delighted when it came up with something really-out-of-the ordinary - and illustrating in the process how Bing acquired, or developed his exquisite taste for the quality things of life:

> "I was very interested in John Leech's articles last October-November on the disappearance of Bradenstoke Priory. So many of our ancient buildings disappear and become only a memory and a few local tales.
>
> However, whilst reading Bing Crosby's biography by Charles Thompson, I was intrigued to read the following:
>
> > 'Crosby's study is panelled in rich, dark wood bought from the William Randolph Hearst estate and said to have been originally part of a sixteenth-century monastery'.
>
> Could this be reference to the timber removed to embellish Hearst's castle at St. Donat's? If so, it would seem to have travelled further afield than at first thought, since Crosby's home was in Hillsborough, San Francisco, USA.
>
> M.E.Salmon,
> Lanes End Farm,
> Gastard,
> Corsham.

Our grateful acknowledgements to the paper mentioned and to Mr. Salmon. There would seem to be a distinct possibility that his surmise is correct.

THE BING CROSBY HISTORICAL SOCIETY mounted a campaign for a commemorative postage stamp in honour of Bing, tackling all departments and personalities from President Reagan downwards; it seems, however, a 1971 ruling in Congress prevents anyone being so honoured (except Presidents) until they have been deceased for 10 years.

VINTAGE CORNER PRESENTS -

MILESTONES OF CROSBYANA

Pedantically inclined members may argue that everything written about Bing Crosby must of itself be vintage. We wouldn't argue too violently against this; but our vintage pieces are culled from the past. Correspondence shows our cullings to be of enormous interest - to the younger people who thereby gain an impression of what was being said and what was happening before they were interested, or even born. And for the older members they bring back vivid and happy memories.

In this issue our "vintage" pieces are comparatively recent - if you'll forgive the term. They are not from the 30's (the decade we love to talk about) but indeed from the 'Fifties. As you will see, there are two items and both represent an important milestone in the pursuit of Crosbyana - i.e. the research and study of Bing Crosby's fabulous career.

'BEAT' SCRIBE DISCOVERS A VINTAGE CROSBY

APRIL 11, 1953

Bing Crosby discophiles who have been lying dormant these past few years can now don their rubber gloves for a real junkshopping junket.

The quest? A vintage Crosby that even the experts have missed.

According to George Hoefer, Hot Box columnist of "Down Beat" magazine, Bing's very first recording has been found and verified. Its title is I'VE GOT THE GIRL by Don Clark and his Los Angeles Biltmore Hotel Orchestra, and NOT Paul Whiteman's WISTFUL & BLUE as listed by discographers Mello and MacBride in their 100-page 'Crosby on Record'.

Hoefer reveals that Bing's brother Larry informed the discographers that Bing's first record wasn't listed. Bing recalled making a disc with a Don Baker orchestra on Columbia before the WISTFUL & BLUE Crosby-Al Rinker duet was cut with Whiteman on December 22, 1926.

For two years, Mello and MacBride made an unavailing search for the record. Then, about a month ago, a San Francisco collector located a Don Clark recording of I'VE GOT THE GIRL with vocal refrain.

(Cont. over

(Bing probably looked something like this when he made I'VE GOT THE GIRL:) ---------->

"Sure enough," writes Hoefer, "Bing and Al Rinker, the late Mildred Bailey's brother, were doing a duet." The duettists' names, however, are now shewn on the disc, which is black label Columbia 824D.

According to Mello, the disc must have been made in October, 1926; Hoefer considers the date should be June.

Brian Rust, discographiscal "brain" of the BBC Gramophone Library, told us: "Mello's date is the right one. I recall "I've Got the Girl" but I did not realise the vocal was taken by Crosby and Rinker. The record was issued here as by The Charleston Serenaders on Columbia Black Label 4310 'With Vocal Chorus'.

The coupling, which came from the same session, was "Idolizing". Also from the same session, and released back-to-back in the States - but not here - were 'When You Waltz with the One You Love' and 'Just One Little Kiss' on Columbia 790D.

"The matrix numbers are: Girl: 142785, Idolizing 142784, Love 142783 and Kiss 142782."

This revelation in April 1953 came as a bombshell and all the discographers - of which perhaps the most formidable team was in Britain - were greatly excited whilst revising their listings. It had always been believed that Bing's first recordings (as indeed indicated above) were with Paul Whiteman in 1926 two or three months after this discovery. Newer and younger collectors accept, as they do with so much else of the celebrated discographies, these facts knowing them to be accurate without the need to undertake industrious research on their own part.

And, of course, while this celebrated first record of Bing's is fairly common on tape/cassette, very few indeed have the actual record. And the search still goes on for it! Junk-shops, jumble sales, all old piles of 78s lovingly collected by someone now deceased, are eagerly searched for this prized and elusive record. And there's no reason why YOU shouldn't carry on with the hunt!

It must be said that without Larry Crosby's tip-off, this recording would almost certainly have never been discovered. Bing had not been known to have worked with Don Clark's orchestra; Bing and Al were probably just roped in for the session as a result of the music-hall act they were doing at the time. That was often the way "Vocal Refrains" were engineered in those early days. Listening to the record with hindsight, it is detectable that it is indeed Bing and Al (Bing's timbre and vibrato, right from the start, remained fairly easy to detect) but whether it would have been identified WITHOUT that hindsight must remain questionable. It is a typical, pseudo-jazzy effort so typical of the 'Twenties - a bouncy little foxtrot, forsooth! No doubt Bing and Al cheerfully pocketed the few bucks they got for the 'job' - and virtually forgot about it, tho' Bing does, in the introduction to his musical autobiography set, remark that he bootlegged a few records in abandoned warehouses....

So to our second vintage piece - also from a trade paper of the times.

The second vintage "flashback" comes from the same musical paper and is a review at the time of issue of Bing's MUSICAL AUTOBIOGRAPHY SET: the date of this piece was March 12, 19[illegible]5:

RECORD REVIEWS:

BING CROSBY for three hours 46 minutes is a lot of Bing. But this is the total playing time of five 12-inch LPs (10 sides) released by Brunswick under the title BING - A MUSICAL BIOGRAPHY (LAT 8051/5)

The sides feature Bing singing some of the songs he is most closely associated with. They range from MUDDY WATER his first recorded solo, to IN THE COOL, COOL, COOL, OF THE EVENING (with Jane Wyman). And the whole is linked by Bing's narration, which includes liberal anecdotes concerning the tunes, their composers, and - in many cases - filmic associations.

To use Bing's own phrase, this is a marathon project; space would not permit a detailed listing of all the songs. Suffice to say that there is a fair quota of those Bing hits from the "golden" song era of the early and mid-'Thirties - tunes like PLEASE, THE DAY YOU CAME ALONG, LOVE IN BLOOM, JUNE IN JANUARY, and LOVE THY NEIGHBOUR.

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It is self-evident that an album of this nature, which is bound to conjure up a nostalgic panorama of the past, should appeal most strongly to the over-thirties.

And it is in this respect that the album, to my mind, slightly falls down. For so many of the old songs have been re-recorded, and now have Bing singing with THE BUDDY COLE TRIO.

The reason for this is that most of the early Bings now belong to EMI who, of course, have the sole rights of release.

Under these circumstances, it was not possible for Brunswick to issue the original recordings that are so familiar to Bing admirers, and also to the youngest generation via BBC broadcasts.

It seems that Bing was not unaware of this point. He draws attention to Eddie Lang's accompaniment on the original version of PLEASE, says that Perry Botkin simulates Lang's guitar playing on this occasion. Perry does so admirably enough, but Lang's work was only one facet of a memorable recording; IRVING AARONSON and his Commanders contributed their part, too.

The younger generation aforementioned may not care about such fine points of distinction; the fact remains that many may find that there is 'something lacking' in this otherwise entertaining and musically historic release.

A further three points are worth mentioning. Bing says his first solo recording was MUDDY WATER, made with Paul Whiteman in 1926.

Brian Rust, "memory man" of the BBC Gramophone Library quotes the date as March 7, 1927. In passing, he also pointed out that in MISSISSIPPI MUD, the word 'darkies' in the line 'When the darkies beat their feet' - which was in the original version - has been changed to 'people'.

This is understandable. Not so understandable is the omission of what was certainly one of Bing's biggest-ever hits - BUDDY CAN YOU SPARE A DIME?. Unless, of course, it is due to the fact that the theme is currently out of political favour.

The album, which retails at £8.13;4d includes at 12-inch x 12-inch illustrated Bing "discography" listing all his available Brunswick recordings from 1931 to 1954. But discophiles should note that while there is a profile on Bing there is no comprehensive personnel data.

Thus the way a "review of the times" dealt with what was probably another "first" for Bing - that of a biography; and when this was followed in the early 60's with the remarkable BING'S HOLLYWOOD, BING 1-15 inclusive together they constituted quite remarkable tributes to Bing's enormous output and his stature as the world's No. 1 record-maker - in all senses. The date of the above review may be indistinct on some copies: it is March 12, 1955.

The point about "people" for "darkies" has, by coincidence, been mentioned in DISCROSBY in this issue. It is pure coincidence. Its a thought that were the autobiography project being planned today it would be possible to include the original recordings omitted from the set on contractual grounds now that EMI is allied with MCA. On the other hand, the set would have had to be expanded from the 5 LPs for by using brief versions only with Buddy Cole (who pressed Bing for the effort all the way thro' we learned) many more songs were included than otherwise would have been possible. The set has, of course, been reissued (and is currently available) under different catalogue numbers but there is little doubt that the set will NOT be remade on the lines observed above, i.e. with the original recordings.

Its difficult to realise that this autobiography set was issued almost 30 years ago now, especially when it is considered that Bing carried on for another 23 years.
Quite remarkable. Although we hadn't really noticed it before, the omission of BUDDY CAN YOU SPARE A DIME is rather surprising. It was a big record for Bing and just as surprising, its been curiously neglected on micro-groove reissues. We've remarked before that it is doubtful Bing sang this as a "protest" song (as in the modern idiom)but merely because it was a song of the times. I would be surprised if, as suggested in the above vintage review, political considerations came into it, though this may be possible; certainly some aspect has made the recording comparatively rare.

The way things are shaping it could easily be revived again, this time as a heart-felt protest!. Let's hope the companies plump for Bing's fine version!

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BEST OF TWO WORLDS! entertaining - and educational!

- is the way we may describe this brain-teaser set by LIONEL PAIRPOINT.

SO YOU THINK YOU KNOW BING'S MILLION-SELLERS ?

Can you identify 16 of Bing's million-selling records from the clues:

WHICH MILLION-SELLER -

(1) - first sold a million for its Russian-born composer in 1911 but was Bing's second attempt?

(2) - was originally introduced by Roy Rogers but was intended as the theme for a movie about Will Rogers?

(3) - was written by a prominent British neurological specialist and did Bing change the English for?

(4) - was nominated for an Academy Award and was first sung on screen by Betty Grable, John Payne and June Haver?

(5) - was written by J.S.Pierpont for a Sunday School treat and was also a million-seller for "The Singing Dogs"?

(6) - was first featured in a 1943 film called "Doughboys in Ireland" by a trio who later sang it with Bing?

(7) - has a range of only six notes and was written in 1913 under the original title of "Haere Ra"?

(8) - was written by a former paperhanger named Albert Poindexter (who also sold a million with his own version), for a cafe proprietress called Molly Jackson?

(9) - was duetted, on film, by Ethel Merman and Dan Dailey and was originally from the composers first revue in 1914?

(10) - was originally sung by the Strasser Sisters for the King and Queen of Saxony and was recorded by Bing with six different accompanists?

(11) - was judged to be better than "They Can't Take That Away From Me" and was a notable first?

(12) - began as the "Ten Commandments" and was later honoured by appearing in a standard U.S. school song-book?

(13) - has 16 letters in its title, 9 of which are vowels and was recorded by Bing twice in July?

(14) - was the last hit song written by its composer (who was born and buried in Peru) and was the first (and last) for the daughter of an Olympic champion?

(15) - was featured in "Road to Bali" and "Riding High" and owes more than a little to Rudyard Kiping?

(16) - did Bing sing in three films and was also a million-seller for Frank Sinatra?

Tough? The tip is to think of the million-sellers FIRST - and then try and match them to the clues. The answers are lengthy and appear further on in this issue. Whether or not you get them all it is certain you will learn something about the songs concerned!

Keep smiling - and wrestling !

FURTHER NEWS ON THE SALE

More details have come to hand regarding the "auction" of Bing's possessions already reported earlier in this issue. New items read:

'Mrs. Crosby said: 'I talked it over with Bing's four sons from his first marriage and our own three children and we all decided it was best to share most of Bing's things with his fans.'

Since her husband's death in 1977 on a golf-course in Spain at the age of 74, Mrs. Crosby has been consolidating the contents of their three homes into one.

She has not kept on the home in Guadalajara, Mexico, or the Rising River Ranch in Northern California, but will continue to live in the Crosby mansion in Hillsborough, south of San Francisco.

THE FAMILY CONTEMPLATED BUILDING A MUSEUM BUT THEY ESTIMATED THE COST TO BE APPROACHING A MILLION POUNDS. THEY DECIDED INSTEAD TO HOLD THE FOUR-DAY AUCTION, STARTING ON MAY 25.

The auctioneers, Butterfield & Butterfield, have room for only 500 in their gallery on Sutter Street, San Francisco, and are expecting an overflow crowd. Viewing will be for three days on May 22.

THERE ARE STILL BING CROSBY FAN CLUBS ALL OVER THE WORLD AND MRS. CROSBY RECEIVES AN AVERAGE OF 50 LETTERS A DAY FROM WELL-WISHERS.

The memorabilia section of the auction will run to about 1,250 items, but it is not known how much will be raised.

One autographed first recording of PLEASE is considered a particular collectors' gem. So is an early recording by the Gus Arnheim Band of FOOL ME SOME MORE which lists the singer only as 'Vocal by B. Crosby'.

Selections from the crooner's collections of jewellery, antique furniture and paintings will be for sale, including a sporting picture by Alfred J. Munnings 'On the Moors' valued at up to £200,000. THE MONEY EARNED WILL BE GIVEN TO CROSBY'S FAVOURITE CHARITIES.

Also on sale is the golf driver with which Bing made his first hole-in-one, the first of 11, at the famous Over-the-Ocean 16th hole in Monterey, California, which is still the site of the Bing Crosby Championship, now run by his son Nathaniel.

BING CROSBY LEFT HIS FORTUNE IN A FAMILY TRUST AND ITS SIZE WAS NEVER DISCLOSED. INFORMED ESTIMATES PUT IT AT 100-million dollars ((£56,800,000) - the RESULT OF SHREWD INVESTMENT.

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These further details help to put the whole business in a better light, it may be thought. We used capitals above where we thought the purport was of especial interest.

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Even so, we still feel that the vast majority of Bing's admirers - the legions of them - will be unhappy that, of all things, his gold and platinum records are not to be regarded as priceless family heirlooms. It seems inconceivable that these tokens of musical history, and the hall-marks of Bing's unique career, are to be put under the hammer, no matter to whom they may fall due. They earned, and deserved, a much more appropriate home.

BETTER LATE

We're regrettably late in discovering this little item; it is of such interest, however, we feel we cannot omit it, even at this stage. It comes from GOLF WORLD of December 1980, to whom acknowledgements:

BING'S LAST SWING

Bing Crosby's last game of golf in Great Britain has been commemorated at the Cranbrook Club in Kent where he played it.

Just two days before he died on October 14, 1977, Bing played 11 holes round Cranbrook. Now, three years to the day, the club has held its first commemorative trophy event.

Winners of the flag competition were the club's junior captain, Andrew Lee and Jim Cox who tied with Marry Knight and Mike Riddle. Both pairs finished their round on level par by holing out on the 18th green.

Bing actually played his eleven holes on the day he visited the club with a view to buying it. He wanted a golfing base in Britain while on holiday here or filming. The club has kept his signed scorecard for the day which shows he was five over par at the end of his eleven holes.

The club has successfully fought off all those who sought to buy the card as a souvenir and it is now kept under lock and key.

And another "flashback": member Barry Hollowday of Wick,Littlehampton, tells us he was a member of a team that restored a mighty Wurlitzer organ in Worthing and among those invited to perform on it was Robin Richmond. Chatting to him at the time - the time of Bing's passing - Robin revealed to Barry that he had invited Bing to appear on his popular radio programme, THE ORGANIST ENTERTAINS (BBC-2) - you will recall that when Bing was spending so much time here he was being invited to all kinds of programmes from GRANDSTAND to SOUNDS NATURAL and DESERT ISLAND DISCS. Bing had cheerfully agreed to sing with Robin and onlythe tragedy of Spain ruled it out. During his programme, however, Robin paid tribute to Bing and then played a medley of PLEASE, HERE LIES LOVE, ending with THANKS. A very nice tribute we, once again, hadn't heard of before.

ON THE NEXT PAGE is an article which appeared in Melbourne, Australia about our old and good friend, BOB MACHLISS which we feel will be of interest. There was a picture of Bob surrounded by his Crosbyana too - but too complex to reproduce!

Bing - still the king

THE Old Groaner died in 1977 but the voice still croons on for a bunch of Melbourne Bing Crosby fans.

By TREVOR ROBBINS

They are serious about the musical outpourings of the Crosby recording career, which spanned from 1926 to 1977.

Melbourne advertising man Bob Matchliss was the catalyst in the ultimate birth of the Victorian Bing Crosby Society.

Bob was born in 1944, the year the Old Groaner was recording tunes like "Begin the Beguine" and "Accentuate the Positive".

He caught the Crosby bug at age six when he heard the Crosby rendition of "The Teddy Bears Picnic". Now he's hooked for life on the voice that has recorded more than 1800 commerical tunes, appeared in several dozen motion pictures and hundreds of radio and television programs.

The Crosby magic really started to work on Bob Matchliss in the 1960s when a Melbourne radio station started playing a lot of re-released Crosby material.

"That was when I really discovered Crosby. Shortly after that I started working and could afford to buy records.

"I began picking up Crosby records and building up my collection," he said.

Bob soon found he was not alone in his admiration for the singer. In 1970 he put to air the first of 30 Bing Crosby radio programs on Melbourne's 3ZZ.

Listener reaction was enormous and Bob soon found he had so many kindred spirits out there that they banded together and formed the Society in August 1977.

One of the basic objectives of the society was to invite Bing Crosby, at the time still churning out records as he had every year since 1926, to become an honorary life member.

Sadly, just two months after the Society was formed Crosby was dead. A few days before his death he put down his last track, "Sail Away From Norway".

Bing's widow, Kathryn, accepted the honorary life membership intended for her late husband.

According to Bob Matchliss, the Society has grown beyond all expectations with a membership now approaching 300.

"Our membership is truly an international one with members in England, USA, Holland, Brazil, New Zealand, Canada and Japan," he said.

The Victorian Society is not the only Crosby society. There are three in the USA and two in the UK.

The entire Crosby recording output, not counting alternate takes, lasts a bit over 106 hours. The Society has it all on 59 90-minute tapes and lends them to members along with video cassettes of Bing's films made from 1929 to 1964.

Crosby's long recording career got cracking in 1926 when he recorded a tune called "I've Got The Girl" for Columbia.

He was merely the "vocal chorus" on that record featuring the Charleston Serenaders.

A couple of months later Crosby cut his first side with the legendary Paul Whiteman orchestra but still had no credit on the label.

The first billing Crosby received was in 1929 when he put down on wax a 78 rpm "I Kiss Your Hand, Madame".

As historic as that record may be a copy of the original U.S. issue in good condition fetches only about $10.

To many, Crosby is mainly associated with his smash hit recording of "White Christmas".

Crosby watchers, particularly fans like Bob Matchliss, are quick to remind you of Bing the jazz singer and point to the hot, swinging vocals he made with Bix Beiderbecke and Frankie Trumbauer.

Members of the local Society are fascinated with the singing voice of Crosby and how this man with the cowlick hairpiece was able to develop a multi-million dollar industry around him.

Bob Matchliss sees Crosby as a complex man and an astute businessman.

"The Crosby personality was refined by a lot of people. He had excellent writers working for him in those early pre-television days," he said.

Matchliss declined to pick a favorite Crosby but preferred to name a particular period, 1933, which he says was an exciting time in the crooner's discography.

That was the year Bing made records like "Blue Prelude", "Home On The Range" and "Did You Ever See A Dream Walking", all of which rate highly in Bob's estimation.

It's not only the voice that appeals to Crosby fans. Bing was a marvellous whistler and could pucker up and blow like a musical instrument.

His last recording featured the famous Crosby whistle.

Jim McManus, a foundation member of the Society, first discovered Crosby in the 1930s and even took to crooning around the house.

The former owner of a vintage record bar and now retired, Jim likes the Bing of the 30s and 40s.

"Bing seemed to be an easy-going bloke and had an easy, relaxed way of singing. I would have loved to be able to stand up and sing as easily as he did.

"I met Frank Sinatra and Peggy Lee but I missed out on meeting Bing. It's one of my biggest regrets," Jim said.

To new Society member John Millard, a meter reader on pressure control equipment, Crosby is the epitome of relaxation.

"I like the feeling of relaxation he gives. Bing doesn't turn me on as an actor or dancer, though. The Crosby of 1933 — that's the year I like best," John said.

The Crosby stalwarts who meet in Melbourne eight times a year to listen to new material (which is constantly being discovered) and enjoying old Crosby movies have no doubt his music will endure.

For those under the spell of the Crosby magic and looking for a deeper commitment for their appreciation of the man the Victorian Bing Crosby Society can be reached through P.O. Box 422, South Melbourne, 3205.

The Sun, Tuesday, Feb. 23,

DISCrosby

ABOUT RECORDS..OLD, EVEN OLDER! and some newer...

Some people found it very much the fashion in the 20's and 30's - possibly since - to sneer and make derogatory remarks about popular songs, especially the singers who sang them, and particularly the dance-band vocalists with their 'Vocal Refrains'. Moon and June, which naturally figure a lot in love songs, came in for plenty of sneers with reference to the "whining perpetrators" of such songs. Well, moon and June isn't all that bad a rhyme. True, some of the songs were banal and trite tho' there were scores, perhaps hundreds, where the lyrics reached a very high standard indeed.

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Think of TIME ON MY HANDS, JUST ONE MORE CHANCE, WHEN DAY IS DONE, STARDUST, THE VERY THOUGHT OF YOU, TEMPTATION, and so on....Yet if one refers to the fact that most of today's 'standards' mostly originate from that 20-30's era those intent on denigration refer to THREE LITTLE FISHES, MAIRZY DOATS & DOZY DOATS and others, ignoring completely the fact that such songs were written purely as nonsensical or novelty numbers!

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And one lyric which never fails to impress me every time I hear it, which is fairly often, runs:

I'm free, as the wandering breeze,
I'm free, to wander any place I please
And yet - I can't escape from you...

I'm free, as the birds in the trees,
I'm free, to sail those seven seas -
And yet - I can't escape from you.

I could ride away, hide away,
Where we were miles apart -
But when I got there, I'd find you there
Right in my heart and so
You see, I'm really not free,
I'm so afraid you might escape from me
- And yet, I can't escape from you.

Consider the neat if plaintive last two lines. I venture the view that if that lyric had been written by Wordsworth, Milton, or Keats it would have appeared in countless anthologies of love-poems.

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The song, I CAN'T ESCAPE FROM YOU comes, of course, from Bing's 1936 film RHYTHM ON THE RANGE and was written by the skilled team of Leo Robin and Richard A Whiting. Bing's rendering is faultless - naturally! - but there's one other thing remarkable about this recording. Bing sings the song with suitably romantic accompaniment from the orchestra of Jimmy Dorsey; thereafter the band plays a chorus in what can only be described as in true swing style! Thus, the best of several worlds on one record - as often happened with Mr. C. Its a lovely song.

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In his book, THE CROSBY YEARS, Ken Barnes relates the story of how put out Bing was when, after listening to the recordings made for the London Palladium "live" set, he remarked he had sung the word "cloud" instead of "light" in the lyric of THE WAY WE WERE. Unusually Bing wanted it altered if it was possible; this was done by what can only be described as a truly miraculous bit of editing whereby the "cloud" was replaced by engineer Steve Taylor with the correct word "light". Bing felt, it appeared, that the composers "would be after my hide."

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While there is no doubt this contretemps occurred, and allowing for the fact that "cloud" is virtually the precise opposite of "light" it does seem strange that, so late, Bing got concerned about such an error - and what the composers would think. Consider, he had spent his entire recording career of 50 years plus altering lyrics - either accidentally or deliberately! One doesn't need THE ALTERNATE BING CROSBY (tho' it helps!) to appreciate this! We know that the writers of PISTOL-PACKIN MAMA didn't include "lay that thing down before it goes off and hurts somebody", the interpolation which convulsed the Andrews Sisters.

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There are truly scores of examples where Bing departed from the written words - there was one classic where he sang "posolutely" and "absotively"....or he would sing "these" dreams on one occasion, and "those" on another. And, it never seemed to bother him before; and it always delighted us. So why, I can only wonder, did he get so adamant about the "cloud" and "light" syndrome? We'll never know now.

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Bing often altered lyrics, too, for what might be described as political reasons, or the current social atmosphere. Instances of this are contained in GALWAY BAY where Bing tactfully says "The strangers came to teach us their way..." instead of the written "The English came to teach us their way...." Again, when he sang SWANEE RIVER originally he correctly sang: "Oh, darkies how my heart grows weary..." Years later, when he did CALL OF THE SOUTH with Gary, and countered Gary's melody of the latter with SWANEE RIVER he sang: Oh, people how my heart grows weary..." Bowing to social atmospheres!

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And the mind can only boggle if this was applied to that famous recording of SHINE that Bing did with the celebrated Mills Brothers in 1932. We recall that when in 1966 Bing made his well-remembered visit to Cockermouth in the Lake District to make a salmon-fishing film he was visited throughout by hordes of Crosby admirers. The late Leslie Phythian of Liverpool, was among those who had delightful - and prolonged - chats with Bing in his hotel. During one of these talks Leslie recalled this great recording and remarked that, as the Mills Brothers were still going strong, it would be a fine idea if Bing and

they got together for a modern album - and include SHINE! Bing took his pipe from his mouth and in those rumbling tones said "Ah...the social climate wouldn't permit anything like that these days..."

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It wouldn't go down well in America; here it would involve the Race Relations Board immediately. Here again was another example of the best of two worlds.- Bing and the Mills Brothers in a fine, melodic yet jazzy rendering of the song that had strong "colour" overtones. And in 1932 Bing could refer to the soloing brother as "Chocolate Drop"; and refer to his "pearly teeth" and "curly hair". Yet who would take offence at the way it was done? Certainly not his fellow-artists who clearly - like so many others - obviously loved working with Bing.

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Can anyone, however, imagine Bing singing "Youse a shady baby!" to a coloured performer? I fear not. Not these days. Yet it remains one of Bing's finest efforts, surely - tho' we hasten to add it may not appeal that much to the "newa fellas" who came into the Crosby orbit in the 60's and 70's. But, who knows? The record certainly answers those who are inclined to ask: Did Bing sing jazz? He did, consistently and brilliantly. He sings a splendid chorus, interpolates with one of the Mills Brothers in a chorus, does that phenomenal scat-chorus exactly as if Bix Beiderbecke were playing his cornet! And yet, as often happened with Bing, he ended the whole thing with a strangely poignant note on the final "shine"....

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Bing did not make any records with the Brothers after those early years - around the time of THE BIG BROADCAST OF 1932 actually. But happily, he maintained a firm friendship with them that endured over the long years; for example, he described once how he frequently played golf with them. And, of course, he had them as guests on his radio programmes several times, the songs of which survive on tape and non-commercial records. And the Mills Brothers have well survived Bing for they are singing (now as a trio) to this day. Although no tribute was reported from them, the passing of Bing must have been a very sad event for them, too.

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If the story of the Mills Brothers is ever written it will reveal an astonishing epic of durability, popularity, and remarkable ability. There can be few artists who have regularly recorded for well over 50 years as they have done.

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Bing never recorded with that other coloured quartet, The Ink Spots - and as far as I can ascertain, never had them as guests on radio. Considering the popularity they enjoyed all thro' the 40's (tho' they started around 1934 they didn't hit the big-time until their very individual performance of IF I DIDN'T CARE hit the jackpot) it seems quite an omission. The contrast of Bing's rich baritone with the remarkable tenor of the Ink Spots' lead singer, Bill Kenny, would have been intriguing to say the least;

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Connee (who started off as Connie!) Boswell is held by many to be their favourite female Bing-duettist tho' others would nominate Rosemary Clooney. The latter, of course, came along later - much later in fact - as our quiz showed in the last issue - Rosie came along in the micro-groove era while Connie was vocalising with Bing in 1932! This, however, was with her two Sisters; it was not until 1937 that Connee made her first'solo' recording with Bing - the notable BASIN STREET BLUES which remains as popular a Crosby record as any, perhaps. The 1932 recording with the Boswell Sisters was LAWD, YOU MADE THE NIGHT TOO LONG, which in later years enjoyed some popularity in parody form, eg SAM, YOU MADE THE PANTS TOO LONG!

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It may surprise some to learn that Connee Boswell, tho' making such an early start with Bing, recorded THAT'S A PLENTY as late as 1952. Twenty years, therefore, since LAWD! No mean career.

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I find it most curious however, on the subnect of Bing-Connee Boswell records that invariably, both Bing and Connee adopted the negro dialect. Have you noticed? In YES INDEED there was possibly the reason that it was a light-hearted negro-spiritual song. Hence the Sister Constance and Brother Bingstanceand 'Has you got it sister?' syndrome.

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Yet, to my ears, the tendency persisted in all their recordings - all nine of them, including LAWD. Even in the English - so-English - musical comedy number, TEA FOR TWO, this was in evidence. And it is assuredly apparent when the two appeared together on radio, this trend of using negro dialect was always apparent.

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There was no such tendency in the Rosemary Clooney duets - so much more prol'ific, too. Rosie will certainly have the No. 1 vote from a lot of Crosby people. Her duets with Bing in the up-tempo things like the TRAVELLIN' TWO-BEAT album and the RENDEZVOUS (also issued under other fitles) were certainly of the highest calibre, while her bitter-sweet duets and solos in that remarkable project, HOW THE WEST WAS WON are classics of their kind. If Connee excelled at the 'negro' idiom it might be said Rosie was at home with the 'Western' or country girl accents - almost in Annie Oakley style. And incidentally, has anyone ever puzzled out precisely what Rosie sings in JENNY JENKINS when, after being asked by Bing "Will you wear red oh my dear..." she answers with a reason why she will NOT wear that colour, starting off "I'll buy me fol-de-rol...." and then gabbles off at a fantastic rate.

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If anyone has succeeded in working out what she sings I'd be most interested to hear! In quite different vein is Rosie's rendering of CARELESS LOVE - an incredibly bitter-sweet effort that lingers in the mind.

****

Having mentioned Connie and Rosie there may be those who will be put out if Peggy Lee isn't mentioned! Well, we hereby rectify the position - Peggy was a very prominent co-partner of Bing's, especially on the radio tho' she did appear on nine or so commercial recordings also. Yet, though Peggy Lee became a considerable star in her own right, as she remains today, and indeed as did Connee and Rosemary, the impression I get among members is that Peggy for some reason is not indisolubly linked with Bing as the other two ladies.

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Reverting to the "moon" syndrome, tho' without the June this time; although the astronauts have sadly demonstrated that the lunar sphere is just a cold, miserable, desolate waste of dustland, its unlikely to lose its romantic associations. For the young anyway! Bing made so many records with the word "Moon" in them (as a recent quiz showed) that they make quite an interesting collection if put together. Yet, they would contain one important omission - uuless you 'cheated' and included a radio item instead of a commercial recording.

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Rummaging thro' some old reel-to-reel tapes the other day - an exercise that is very, very infrequent these days - I came across a track I was quite unaware I had. Sadly, it was in very tatty state as far as quality goes but, happily, recourse to a colleague has brought me a much better version. The song concerned is DARK MOON.

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Do you recall this song from the late 50's? One of my daughters bought it as a single around that time, rendered by a young lady of the name of (would' vou believe?) Gale Storm - tho' it may have been Gail Storm. I remember thinking what a nice song it was, good melody and not unacceptable lyric. Later on I got it on a good album by the Mills Brothers (this piece seems full of coincidences, doesn't it?) As they always did, they made a fine job of this DARK MOON.

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And, as sometimes happens, I found myself regretting that Bing had not recorded this song for it was, I believe, tailor-made for him. I wasn't 'into' many radio tapes of Bing in the 50's and knew that Bing hadn't hadn't recorded the song commercially. Thus I was resigned to never hearing him sing DARK MOON. Then, startlingly, this old tape - and subsequently the better version - turns up. This really is an exceptionally fine performance by Bing, with an especially thoughtful and melodious arrangement by Buddy Cole. Indeed, as Lionel Pairpoint remarks: How did Bing miss this one when reviewing the Bing/Buddy tapes from which he made his selections? Of course, it may be that DARK MOON wasn't among those he listened to.

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Again, Ken Barnes may have heard the track and passed it over in the belief that Buddy Cole's fine arrangement didn't lend itself to a grafting operation of stereo accompaniment as with the tracks so selected. It is a little unfair to be talking about a track which is not commercially available - and difficult otherwise - and that is not normally the aim of DISCROSBY. However, DARK MOON was contemporary, I believe, with CHURCH BELLS, RAIN, and other records which, lets face it, were not inspired choices (how Jack Kapp was missed!) whereas this song would have been very well regarded, I am certain. There it is...

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But I wouldn't want to denigrate that whole period! Especially with THE NEXT TIME IT HAPPENS and GIGI coming from that time. The first-named, especially, is a particular favourite of mine, mainly because of the typically sympathetic way Bing sang it. GIGI, of course, gave Bing a fine vehicle to exercise those deep, golden, tones of his and also is a record I listen to frequently.

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Had a letter recently from a man who says he is writing a book on the great song stylists - Crosby, Haymes, and Sinatra. This must be a bold subject to tackle seeing that eminent authors and researchers have already covered the ground. And though he had an excellent voice, I don't know that I would categorise Dick Haymes as a stylist. But the main point of this paragraph is the writer said he was having difficulty of getting hold of certain records - and could we help him?

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His difficulty was understandable because he wanted: LEARN TO CROON; AFTER SUNDOWN; THANKS; BLACK MOONLIGHT; THE DAY YOU CAME ALONG; ONCE IN A BLUE MOON; WITH EVERY BREATH I TAKE; MAYBE I'M WRONG AGAIN; WOULD YOU; LOVELY LADY; THE TOUCH OF YOUR LIPS; ROBINS & ROSES; I CAN'T ESCAPE FROM YOU - and PRISONER OF LOVE. He also had PRISONER OF LOVE listed as for 1931 and we had to tell him Bing delayed until 1956 before recording it - perhaps because it was Russ Columbo's theme song. Otherwise his choice was excellent to illustrate a style!

****

That record buying today is a 'different world' to what it was is axiomatic. Records stay in the lists for weeks now; it used to be years. Thirty - forty years ago (and more) one bought a shellac 78rpm, and having bought it was thankful to get it home in one piece, so fragile and brittle were those 78s. We're not going to say anything about the sound of them - that was invariably first-class, as LPs composed of those old records show. Now you get them in vynyl or some other flexible (or comparatively flexible) plastic which stand transport and handling. Now we expect - and get - a nice glossy sleeve, perhaps a vivid picture and (often) sleeve-notes telling of the contents and the artist. But long, long ago, the aforementioned 78s came in plain cardboard 'sleeves' - and how quaint some of them were! Usually the name of the shop, its trade and its address. Quaint? I remember some beauties - such as "M. BLOGGS - GRAMOPHONES, RECORD & CYCLE REPAIRS, GUARANTEED", or "T. BEENE: FOR ALL YOUR KITCHEN UTENSILS - AND RECORDS; and B. KNOTT LTD: GRAMOPHONES REPAIRED, SPRINGS REPLACED, RECORDS, AND ALL GARDEN TOOLS.. I never saw it myself but a friend swears he bought records from a shop that had: "J. PETERSEN & SONS: FURNITURE, GRAMOPHONE RECORDS & ALL YOUR TASTEFUL UNDERTAKING REQUIREMENTS RESPECTFULLY UNDERTAKEN. No, I didn't see it myself - but I believe it. Versatility was the word in those days.....

DON'T READ THIS

unless you have read Page 19; or surrendered - or can't stand conundrums. These are the lenthy and interesting answers to LIONEL PAIRPOINTS puzzle..

(1) ALEXANDER'S RAGTIME BAND: The earliest success for Irving Berlin (born in Temun, Russia); when first published it sold a million copies of sheet-music. Although Bing's recording with Al Jolson in 1947 sold a million he had, of course, made an earlier version with Connee Boswell in 1938.

(2) DON'T FENCE ME IN: Introduced by Roy Rogers in HOLLYWOOD CANTEEN, its success led to a film built around its title, also starring Roy Rogers and is reputed to have been intended as the theme music for a biopic of Will Rogers, for which part Bing 'tested'.

(3) GALWAY BAY: Written by Dr. Arthur Colahan, for whom composing was a hobby and said to have been inspired by seeing the local people digging 'praties' while he was on holiday in Western Ireland. The original lyrics are altered in Bing's version from 'The English came and tried to teach us their ways' to 'The strangers came &c.'

(4) I CAN'T BEGIN TO TELL YOU: Written for the 1945 film THE DOLLY SISTERS starring the trio mentioned; it appeared in the 1946 Academy Award nominations.

(5) JINGLE BELLS: Written in the 19th century for a local Sunday school entertainment. A tape of various toned dog barks was originally recorded in 1955 and was revived with some success in the early 70's.

(6) McNAMARA'S BAND: Originally written in 1917 and interpolated into the film which starred Kenny Baker. Also featured were The Jesters who accompanied Bing on his 1945 version.

(7) NOW IS THE HOUR: Unusually, has a range of only six notes. Adopted by the Maoris as a farewell song to visitors under its original title of 'Haere Ra', the English version was written by Dorothy Stewart who gave it the title of 'Now is the Hour'.

(8) PISTOL PACKIN' MOMMA : The composer, better known as Al Dexter, wrote the song in gratitude for free meals given by the said Molly Jackson, whose husband ran an illicit still, deep in the Kentucky backwoods and to whom she would ride out at week-ends, armed with a pistol for protection. She would call for her husband to come out, to which he would reply, "Lay that pistol down Ma, or I ain't coming." Al Dexter and his Troopers' record of the song also sold a million.

(9) PLAY A SIMPLE MELODY: Featured in the 1955 film 'There's No Business Like Show Business', like other movies before it, a showcase for a clutch of Irving Berlin standards and starring Ethel Merman, Dan Dailey, Marilyn Monroe and Donald O'Connor, the song was written for Berlin's first Broadway revue 'Watch Your Step'.

(10) SILENT NIGHT: Written in Austria by Fr. John Mohr and set to music by Franz Gruber, but made famous by the Strasser Sisters and their brother, who sang old Tyrolean airs while assisting their father at the Leipzig Trade Fair and were later invited to sing the song under its original title 'Song from Heaven' before the King and Queen of Saxony. Bing made recordings with Paul Whiteman (1928); Georgie Stoll (1935); Victor Young (1935); John Scott Trotter (1942 and 1947); Buddy Cole (1954) and Paul Weston (1955).

(11) SWEET LEILANI - Won an Oscar in the 1937 awards (other nominations included REMEMBER ME, THAT OLD FEELING, and THEY CAN'T TAKE THAT AWAY FROM ME). Generally quoted as Bing's first million-seller, tho' in the acknowledged absence of precise records in the 30's many doubt it was the first.

(12) SWINGING ON A STAR: The Academy Award winning song from GOING MY WAY. Johnny Burke was commissioned by Leo McCarey, the director, to write "the Ten Commandments in a rhythm song". Burke's inspiration came from hearing Bing call one of his sons a "mule". I hope this revelation doesn't inspire another book!

(13) TOO-RA-LOO-RA-LOO-RAL: Also from GOING MY WAY but written in 1914 by J. R. Shannon. Recorded by Bing in July 1945 and July, 1947.

(14) TRUE LOVE: Written by Cole Porter, who was born and buried in Peru, Indiana. The record was the only million-seller for Grace Kelly whose father was twice an Olympic single sculls champion.

(15) THE WHIFFENPOOF SONG: Sung by Bing in both the films mentioned and probably composed by a Harvard student in the late 19th century, the song was adopted by The Whiffenpoof Society of Yale University. The words are freely adapted from the Kipling poem "Gentlemen Rankers".

(16) WHITE CHRISTMAS: Sung by Bing in HOLIDAY INN, BLUE SKIES and WHITE CHRISTMAS. The 1944 recording by Frank Sinatra has subsequently sold more than a million.

One has the feeling LIONEL PAIRPOINT has worked hard to confine himself to what are comparatively brief answers! No doubt a full book could be written about such songs. But it does lead us to comment - once more, for it bears repeating - that it is impossible for veteran Crosby fans to accept that it was not until SWEET LEILANI that Bing had his first million-seller; and that took 3-4 years to reach this figure.

True, record players, gramophones, radiograms (call them what you will) were no where near as prolific as they are today, and have been for the past 30 years or so, there were still plenty around. We recall the days when you could buy what was known as a pick-up to convert your old wind-up gramophone so that it played thro' the radio, thus producing an elementary radiogram! These were little gadgets that could replace the soundbox on the gramophone (which always seemed to weigha pound or two! - how DID 78s survive them?) and the sound was, of course, that much better. This was especially so when your radio had a moving-coil speaker! We realise this will be double-Dutch to those of this technological age of built-in music centres and the like.

But we were saying: .....the whole world, it seemed, was queuing up to buy PLEASE, HERE LIES LOVE, BUDDY CAN YOU SPARE A DIME, HOME ON THE RANGE, LOVE IN BLOOM, JUNE IN JANUARY, LEARN TO CROON and so many, many, other recordings. Decca has declared that it kept no precise records in those days so all the so-called lists of million-sellers are speculative if well-meant estimates. All of which has nothing to do with Lionel's intriguing quiz. But, having named 16 of the oft-stated 22 million-sellers Bing achieved, perhaps we can round things off neatly by asking - WHAT WERE THE REMAINING SIX?

We'll tuck them into another corner before the end of this issue. No clues! Just the straightforward question....

An oddity about the 16 songs above, Lionel points out, is that more than half were "old" songs before Bing recorded them!

BING Letters.....

A SELECTION OF MEMBERS' LETTERS.....

MARK PARKER, 24 Springfield Close, Stanmore, MIDD'X: I saw Bing in MISSISSIPPI screened at the National Film Theatre this month (March 1982). My favourite point in the film was Bing's rendering of 'Swanee River' which had the audience spellbound!

MR. T. JENNINGS, 84 Caldy Rd., Llandaff North, Cardiff, CF4 2LL: The most moving experience I ever had of Bing was in the film MISSISSIPPI. I was living in Birmingham at the time; cinemas, or picture palaces as they were often called then, were pretty rowdy places. But when Bing was on in that old American drawing-room, and stood by the piano to join in with 'Swanee River' you could have heard a pin drop. Then when he had finished you could hear only sighs - I thought of satisfaction and appreciation. It was a quite unforgettable experience and remains strong and vivid in my memory of that day in the early 'Thirties. Truly it may be said there was, and can be, only one Bing Crosby....

Editor: I think it will be agreed that to get these two letters by the same post was a remarkable coincidence - two experiences of Bing, BUT, with nearly 50 years between the two viewings!

MRS. GWEN HARVEY, 33 Canterbury Rd., Farnborough, Hants:

I appreciate the magazine very much, especially with so little that is new about for you to work on; but it remains so interesting. For myself, I'd love to read, or should I say re-read, some of the articles mostly found in the American film books which I used to buy in Woolworths for 3d each before the War. I expect you remember - they were so much thicker and glossier than our film books and practically every one had a mention of Bing and so many articles and pictures of him and Dixie, and the boys as they arrived. Deep down I still find it so hard to believe some of the things written, especially by Gary, who was such a lovely child and the one to my way of thinking who most resembled his Dad in looks.

I WONDER WOULD IT BE POSSIBLE AT SOME TIME TO PUBLISH SOME SORT OF 'FAMILY TREE' OF BING'S FAMILY?

I find it sad that I at least have lost track of what has happened to Bing's boys. Who they married; how many children etc. etc.

To me it has always seemed that when Kathryn appeared on the scene it was as though Dixie's family were pushed off the face of the earth, at least by the journalists.

REG BRISTO,
7 GREENMEADOW CLOSE,
CWMBRAN, GWENT,
NP44 4PJ

Please use this address.

Having awaited the birth of each of them I still feel a'something' for them and obviously, as part of Bing, still have interest in their activities.

Editor: A most interesting letter - but firstly, thanks for the compliments and really we have no difficulty at all with material for BING.

We are all for the 'family tree' idea but, frankly, we are quite unable to compile it. Gary turns up on TV in character parts occasionally, and one spots the name Crosby from time to time - but as to whom they all married (and in some cases divorced), what children there are, we just don't know.

They are, of course, all middle-aged men now. In an American interview not all that long before his death, Bing spoke of them in answer to a question by the interviewer. He spoke of earlier troubles, a familiar theme, but added that they all appeared settled and matured now - for which he was very glad.

It does occur to us that there may be some American members who may help with a family tree as suggested by Gwen. Whether they are all in entertainment, or some other business... what children they have and so on. We would be interested, and grateful. It IS a nice thought. GARY, PHILIP, LINDSAY, and DENNIS. And there is another Cathy Crosby, isn't there... one of Bob's daughters?

It goes without saying, of course, that if any members here at home can help with news of the earlier family we'd appreciate it. The second family's lives and the careers they are shaping are well-known.

FRANK CHALLENGER, 17 Steam-Mill Lane, Ripley, Derbys.:

I wish they would put on instead of the news. It would be a sight better than all the misery from the media up and down the country. I used to think politicians knew better and became wise in their maturity. What a gaffe! They will never mature like Bing did - he could play it straight down the middle in all ways!

Editor: Well, BING is really no place for politics and the like, but we would certainly plump for Bing instead of the news. The only snag is: news doesn't go away if you ignore it! Meanwhile, a diplomatic settlment is being pursued and to keep the pot boiling let's sink a few ships, down a few planes, kill a few young men... a diplomatic settlement is being pursued....and so on. WHERE THE BLUE OF THE NIGHT infinitely preferable....unemployment? Cuts? Bankruptcies....that's the snag, they're still there! And we didn't mention - INFLATION! Three-bob for a Mars bar...£1.00 for a packet of fags...help! SING, BING, SING!

G. R. (Tom) EVANS, 84 Brereton Rd., New Invention, Willenhall, West Midlands: Recently I went to see Mrs. Stafford in Birmingham where we former Bing club members used to meet in the 1930's. We used to meet each Saturday and she was always very good to us - she too was a member of the club of course. She is now 81 and still lives in the same house in Erdington on her own. Her two sons and her daughter are married and she has grandchildren. We recalled such times as when Bing was filming SING YOU SINNERS, and listening to SMALL FRY etc. etc. My first Bing record, in fact, was SAILOR BEWARE. It cost 2/6d and though I was only getting 3/- a week to spend it was a great investment for I still have that self-same 78!

How I wanted to meet Bing in those days but it was an impossible dream. During the War I was in Egypt and, of course, we had Bing regularly on records...I've always remembered that his voice, so familiar, so friendly, was the only touch of reality in what was a very, very unreal world.

Editor: How nice to renew contact with a Bing lady of the 30's! - not in itself, there are thousands such ladies but to meet up again with someone one used to meet over 50 years ago!
Tom, of course, with the able assistance of Don Small organises the functions in the West Midlands; they now have a cheque of more than £200 to hand over to charity.
And speaking of DON SMALL, over the page he is the tall elegant chap clearly holding the rapt interest of Bob Hope! DON, who lives at One Lea View, Willenhall, West Mids writes:

I was with Bob Hope at the Golf Classic last September when he visited his "Country cousins" as he calls them. We have been friends of the family and visit them regularly. Bob and I talked a lot, especially of the Road films and of Bing - it was Bing who introduced Bob to his wife, Dolores - in 1934! I took the opportunity to present a plaque to Bob of the Royal Wedding of last year of Prince Charles and Diane - Bob is studying this with real interest in the photograph.

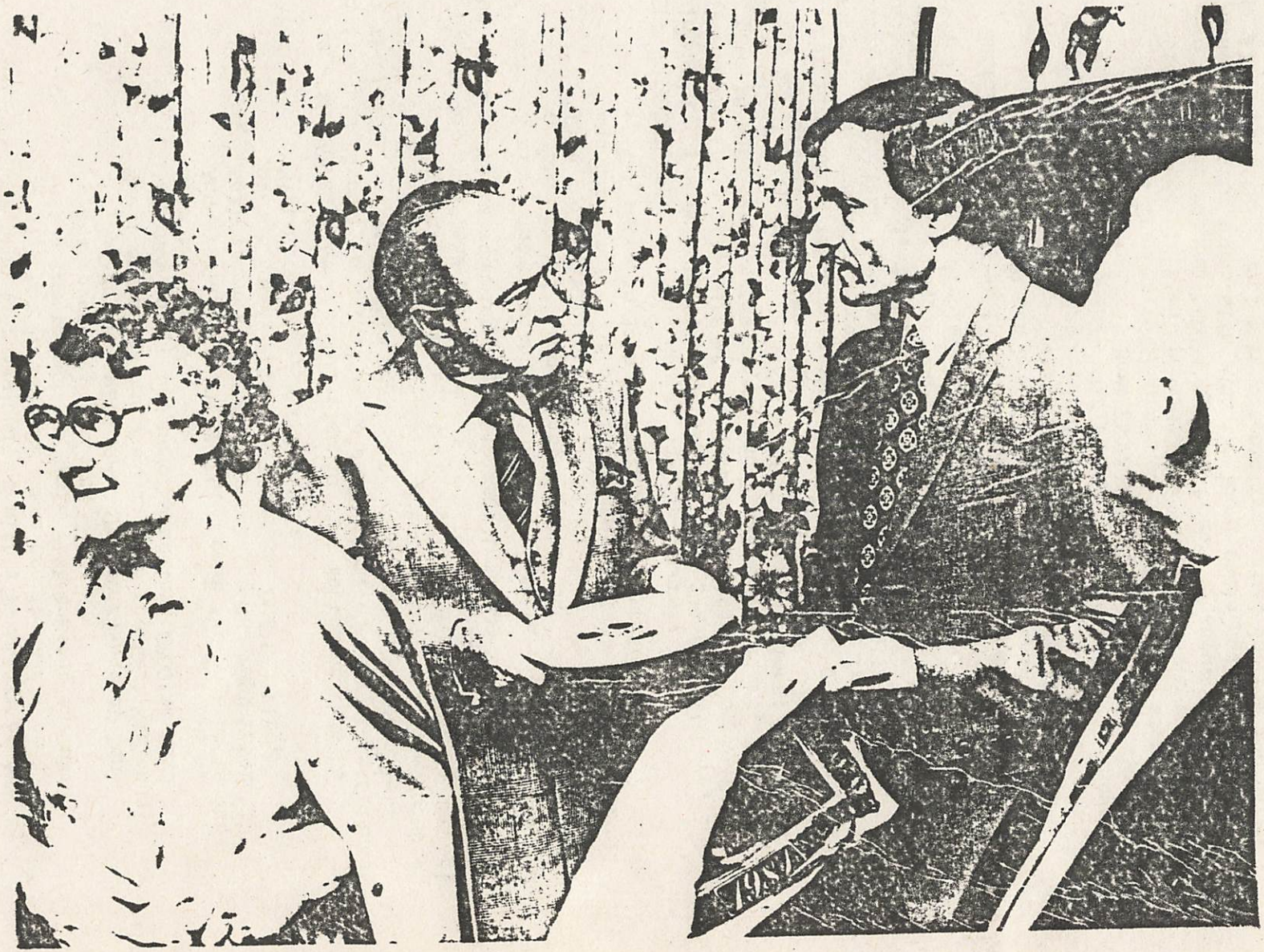
Editor: A nice contact with Bing's famed partner. Our pictures are nothing to write home about but this one shows the principals fairly clearly.
And don't forget, West Midlanders, contact either Don Small or Tom Evans to join in their social functions.

BERT HAMBLETT, 58 Park Rd., Meols, Hoylake, Wirral:
Being a bit of a film buff, especially of the 30's and 40's era, I entered the BBC's Film Buff of the Year competition. They sent me by post 15 questions on the cinema and I got eleven right. I then had to phone them and I was asked a further 10 questions; I managed to get 9½ correcf this time. As a result, I was invited to Pebble Mill in Birmingham to compete with five other buffs. I finished fourth. Subsequently I received another phone call from the BBC inviting me to take part in a further round. This will be taped in Manchester, it seems, and will be screened sometime in June or July. I will be asked six questions on Bing Crosby - so I hope I won't let the side - or the Circle - down!

Editor: We hope we're in time for members to see Bert Hamblett in action on our behalf, as it were! Good luck..... keep an eye on the programmes. Incidentally, back in 1977 one of Bert's local papers ran a quiz on Bing soon after his death. Six people apparently got the answers right - but tho' Bert KNEW he had, he wasn't in the winning list. Then he noticed one of the answers was wrong, ie. When did Bing make his first record? The paper's answer was 1927 - but when Bert approached them they didn't want to know. Not to be outdone, he got in touch with both the local radio and the Consumers Council. Next thing was, a representative turned up from the paper with profuse apologies - and a set of Crosby LPs! As Bert remarked at the time: It pays to complain!

Good luck in the competition, Bert. We'll be watching...

More letters cont. p. 35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NEIL ROBINSON, 4 Hillcrest Aven. Newton Rd., Burton-on-Trent:

On my way to work recently I saw a record shop and took its phone number from the shop-window. Subsequently, I rang and asked if they sold 78s - by any chance? To my astonishment, a man replied that he did - and what particular sort was I interested in? My rep was obvious and to my further astonishment and delight he informed me that he had approximately 400 Bing 78's SPARE for sale! I arranged to call the following Saturday when he said he would bring 100 of them to the shop for me to peruse.

> My wife and I sorted thro' these like Aladdin in his cave and I finally came away with 30 78's and five LPs I had previously sought in vain! Now I have the lovely prospect of three more visits, viewing another hundred records each time! The condition of these 78s is unbelievably good, too. Some in fact are in mint condition.

I won't say what I had to pay for them - but I feel it was worth every penny. The owner of the shop also told me he knew the Mrs. Rainbow of the 1000+ 78s mentioned in the last issue of BING - and really made me turn green when he told me he had obtained - many years ago - the record by Don Clarke & his Biltmore Hotel Orchestra with a vocal by Al Rinker 'and that other fella' for her.

So, now I'm like Mr. Micawber: continually waiting for something to turn up. Some members who get despondent at the apparent shortage of Bing records can take my word for it - KEEP SEARCHING!

> Editor: Indeed, it could happen to you! Such discoveries are always on the cards. Aladdin and his cave? I should say so!

MICHAEL O'TOOLE, 2 Raheen Park, Bray, Co. Wicklow, Ireland:

Many thanks for BING No. 63. I enjoyed every word. It is such a long time since I was part of the Crosby fellowship I had forgotten how much I used to enjoy the quarterly news. Full marks for the production of BING; being in the printing/publishing business myself I know just what is involved in putting that many pages together.

> Do you know of any interested Crosby collectors in Dublin or the surrounding area? I have been collecting well over 30 years and I would love to share my enjoyment with them.

I was lucky enough to meet Bing in Dublin in '76 - and I have the photo to prove it! I also saw Bing at the Palladium in both '76 and '77. It is just great to see the interest in Bing in the pages of your magazine. I think melody is on the way back again and I think Bing's quality will always be a part of the music business.

> Editor: As you will gather, a prodigal son is back in the fold - and you know what they say! Perhaps there are those in Dublin or thereabouts who will respond to Michael's invitation? It would be nice; and its nice to have you back Michael.

PHILIP MORGAN, 5 Sanderson Rd., Jesmond, Newcastle-upon-Tyne:

About a fortnight ago I took along a tape of Bing's to a lady colleague of mine who had expressed an interest in a particular song of Bing's - THE SECOND TIME AROUND. Both she and her husband listened attentively to this and the other songs and whilst the lady expressed her delight at the various tracks, the husband remained curiously silent. I was beginning to think that 'perhaps he doesn't care for Bing. After all, I think he's a Jolson fan - but at least, he is being courteous and listening' when about half-way thro' the tape,

he turned to his wife and said: "You know, this fellow really is immortal." It was said so simply, yet obviously sincerely. I wondered if possibly it was his judgment following a discussion about Bing with his wife? I knew what he meant, naturally.

However, when the tape was finished they began to ask: "Have you got Bing singing this?" or"have you got Bing singing that?" and before I knew it I had been presented with three blank tapes and a list of titles as long as my arm! All of which will give me as much pleasure in preparing as I know they will get when I hand the tapes back to them.

AND IN SIMILAR VEIN....

TOM SHAW, 51 Venmore St., Liverpool 5: The talk of wind-up gramophones in the last issue certainly brought back memories; we had one of those leatherette-cased things and loved it, both at home and taking it to the seaside! But years later, things changed. I took my cassette-player (progress!) to Colwyn Bay and while sitting on the front was playing THE BEST OF BING. Conscious of the nuisance of transistor radios blaring out, I had the volume well down not wishing to disturb anyone. Then I noticed an old gentleman in a white straw hat and light linen coat obviously doing his best to hear better. So, I turned up the sound slightly but saying nothing. That he was obviously enjoying it was plain by his inclined head and tapping feet. And when the tape ended he stood up and came up to me and shook me by the hand , saying how much he had enjoyed the hour! A nice man who left me with a nice feeling.

> Editor: Such encounters are indeed most pleasant. I recall that when I used to play the old 78s in the 30's in the summertime I used to get 'requests' from the neighbours to TURN IT UP HIGHER PLEASE! One doesn't often hear THAT today..... perhaps we would, though, if it were Bing singing....!

KEITH RICHMOND, 27 Glebelands, Pulborough, West Sussex:

I read with mixed feelings the news of the impending auction of Bing's personal belongings. Were they to be kept together in a museum more of the articles could be seen by more people. Once bi up, collections are rarely gathered together again.
On the other hand there is a chance that some of the articles may appear in Britain. It would be nice to be able to afford to pop off to San Francisco for the sale and bring back a memento or two. But, to keep things in perspective, this is NOT Bing's most important legacy. We all know what THAT IS!

DENNIS KIRTLAND, 12 Swinburne Rd., Iffley Rd., OXFORD: You wondered (last issue, p. 34) if Bing and Gracie Fields had ever met prior to that Brighton concert. I seem to recall that Gracie appeared on the Bing Crosby radio show way back and caused quite a sensation when she sang her famous comedy song THE BIGGEST ASPIDISTRA IN THE WORLD. But I'm sure others have already drawn your attention to this fact.

Editor: No, they haven't! May be, could be -- but we've never heard it, or seen it listed, but, of course, we're not acquainted with every radio show Bing did. Who is? Anyone else remember Bing with Gracie? Just personally, Gracie could send shivers down my spine when she sang correctly; her comedy made me go cold for a different reason, Alas.

ONE MORNING IN MAY - with the tulips ablaze - and JOHN BIGNELL is induced to reflect on things Bing.....

From about mid-April to mid-May our garden is ablaze with the cerise shade of colour which denotes Bing Crosby Tulip time. So fascinated had I become with the excellent results of my wife's 'green fingers' - no doubting who is the real gardener in this household - that I almost forgot that early May, besides being the time we celebrate the birthday of the world's greatest troubadour, is also the time for our various contributions to the June issue of BING to be penned and sent on their way to the Editor.

I spent part of 2nd May looking through a scrapbook of cuttings apertaining to the tributes paid to Bing after 14th October 1977. Among much duplicated material which filled the world's press for the rest of that sombre month one phrase caught my eye. It was in one of the lesser-known American papers and went something like this:

> "Bing Crosby developed a unique style of singing in the 1930's which was far and away superior to anything else heard at that time or since. By the mid-1940's the material he was given had changed considerably and had become predictable and 'safe'. He was no longer a trail-blazer and had become the comfortable, soothing, influence we were to know so well and to miss so much..."

To a great extent I found these sentiments were exactly in accord with my own. Certainly with regard to the earlier period there can be little or no dispute that Bing reigned supreme, using the gift of that incomparable voice, together with his matchless interpretations of the lyrics, to carve a niche for himself which, in all probability, will earn him the accolade 'Entertainer of the Twentieth Century' by critics and reviewers yet unborn. The point was reinforced for me when I recently obtained the quite excellent WORLD RECORDS album - HITS OF 1931 - Ambrose & his Orchestra which was mentioned in KEEPING TRADE in the previous issue.

Eighteen fine tracks played by arguably the finest dance orchestra of all time but, because 1931 was such a wonderful year for Bing, including as they do such numbers as I SURRENDER, DEAR, OUT OF NOWHERE, IT MUST BE TRUE, WRAP YOUR TROUBLES IN DREAMS, JUST ONE MORE CHANCE etc. they once again brought home to me the firmly held conviction that excellent as some of the other singers were at this time they had an unfair task in trying to emulate Bing on numbers which he had made his own, merely because he had recorded them! The highly commendable and dependable Sam Browne, vocalist for many years with the Ambrose Orchestra on this album in question, was set this rather unfair 'competition' of singing totally Bing songs. It could, of course, have been Al Bowlly, Russ Columbo, or any of the others who were household names at the time.

On the previous page, Keith Richmond's letter: the words 'broken-up' may be missing.

One of the tracks - I'M GONNA GET YOU - has such a strong, rhythmic and melodious tempo that I defy any singer of status not to make a good job of it. Sam Browne's version is very fine indeed, but it served to illustrate the sheer individuality of Bing by reminding me of another of his unique traits - his ad-libbing qualities!

"No use you trying to give me the air,
(Cos I'll never stand for that!")

Now, I always imagined that the words in parenthesis were part of the written lyric. But Sam Browne doesn't sing it that way - just an example of Bing's superb ad-libbing. Even more astonishing comes at the end of I'M GONNA GET YOU when Bing returns to sing the last couple of lines, and then actually fits a new bit of lyric to the band's coda! Thus:

"See what I'm gonna do to you - babe!"

Whilst a fair case could be made to prove that Bing's material from about 1944 onwards had become 'safe' I do feel that this may have been for two reasons. Jack Kapp was still the guiding influence behind Bing's choice of songs, and from a commercial point of view there is no doubt that much of the pervading atmosphere of the time - war-time and its aftermath -- did lend itself to less jaunty and more reflective, sentimental and patriotic feelings reflected in the songs of the day. But after Kapp's death in 1949 although to an extent I have sympathy with the view that Bing's recording career lacked direction there is ample evidence that certainly in some area it took an upward turn. Splendid collaborations with outfits like Grady Martin & his Slow Foot Five, Bob Scobey's Frisco Jazz Band and - alas - on radio only The Firehouse Five + Two showed Bing was still more than willing - and able - to perform the jaunty up-tempo songs we heard all too infrequently in the 1940's. And indeed, Bing with Buddy Cole was producing in the 50's and 60's efforts like CHICAGO, ALABAMY BOUND, BETWEEN THE DEVIL AND THE DEEP BLUE SEA, WHEN I TAKE MY SUGAR TO TEA and many, many others.

And talking of ad-libs there is the splendid one we get during Bing's version of the number so closely identified with Judy Garland's talented daughter, Lisa Minelli,CABARET when he sings:

"Come right this way - a ringside table"

Done so persuasively that it comes as a distinct anti-climax when one compares Lisa's own version. It might be said, therefore, that as in 1931 Bing was showing Sam Browne and the others the way, so in 1975 he was even showing top stars of a newer generation how to improve upon their own theme songs!

Finally, something to look forward to NEXT YEAR! Those of us in the London area can enjoy the excellent Brian Rust MARDI GRAS Vintage Jazz radio show at 10pm every Sunday evening on Capital Radio. In both 1980 and '81 Brian devoted the whole of his show on the first Sunday in May to Bing, honouring his birthday. He missed this year BUT I have a letter from Brian promising that if I remind him in good time he will do something special next year for the anniversary of Bing's birth - a special EIGHTIETH BIRTHDAY TRIBUTE. Members can rest assured I will do the necessary reminding - and perhaps suggest some of the lesser-known up-beat numbers Bing recorded over the years.

Editor: John gives us further evidence of how Bing used to think nothing of 'rewriting' an author's lyrics - so why so adamant in 1976? While not disagreeing with anything John says in his ever-interesting thoughts, I think it should be borne in mind that Bing's early 30's records showed tremendous, young-man zest and enthusiasm (especially with all the jazz men around him) and inevitably this had to give way to a more mature approach.

The market-place for Crosbyana - wants, disposals in records, books, tapes, pictures &c. Advertisements are free to members but there is a nominal charge of £1.00 for non-Crosby items. We rely on the integrity of members and accept no liability for any transactions arising from this feature; it is up to members to satisfy themselves they are making a satisfactory deal.

TRADING POST

Keep insertions to no more than 6 lines. Request SAE if you have lengthy lists involved.

DESMOND HELLIER, Westfield College, Hampstead, London, NW3 7ST: wishes to obtain a copy of LE BING - offers cash or rare LPs in exchange. Telephone: 01-435-7141.

MISS OLIVE GREGORY, 4 Lyndhurst Rd., Meols, Hoylake, Wirral, L47 7BP: wants BING 7 of the BING'S HOLLYWOOD please.

DENNIS SAVILLE, 4 Albany Court, Albany Rd., London, E10 7EU would like to hear from anyone who has on record or tape Bing singing I SAW STARS from the 1933 two-reel short MGM 'Star Night at the Cocoanut Grove'.

ALASTAIR AIREY, Flat 6, 18 St. Philip Square, London, S.W.8.: Anyone interested in compiling and exchanging favourite Bing on tape? Mixing shows, records, film excerpts, interviews creatively if possible.

FRANK KELLY, 84 St. Georges Rd., Leyton, London E10 5RQ wants No. 6 of BING'S HOLLYWOOD if anyone can help please.

BARRY SANDERCOCK, 10 Captain Cook Close, Chalfont St. Giles, Bucks: Can anyone please let me have a cassette of the record BING CROSBY INTERVIEWED BY WILFRED THOMAS. Will send blank cassette.

PETER HOWARD, Ty Clyd, Park Terrace, Llandrindod Wells, Powys, LD1 6AY has a copy of CALL ME LUCKY to exchange for record or cassette of HIGH TOR.

JIM LOWE, 105 Renfrew Close, Strait Rd., East Ham, London, E6 4PQ: Have 103 78s (including 27 repeats) for sale. Wish to sell as a lot. Offers please 9" x 3" SAE for list. All offers replied to - buyer to collect.

JACK SOUTHER, 2011-44th Avenue, San Francisco, Cal. 94116, USA: is anxious for a UK contact - always interested in nostalgia records of all kinds, especially Bing of course; sheet-music, pictures &c. Needs information on WORLD RECORD releases; can exchange, buy, barter, etc. Would appreciate correspondents.

R.S.(Bob) JONES, 39 Gladstone Str., Hebburn, Tyne & Wear, NE31 2XD: always interested in Bing records you have to sell, exchange...78s, EPs, LPs. All correspondents answered.

"BING" ties in dark blue or maroon, with the silhouette motif - are available from THE BADGE CENTRE, 45 Ropergate, Pontefract, West Yorks, WF8 1JY - £2.80 post paid. Motif thus:

THE CROSBY YEARS by Ken Barnes now costs £10.95p plus postage from the publishers but the Secretary has just a couple of copies available at £10.00 post-paid. Overseas members ask for postage rate please.

BING - JUST FOR THE RECORD, the hardback volume which lists Bing's total recordings in date order and in alphabetical order, together with composer/accompanist details, can be obtained from:
JOHN JOYCE (BOOKBINDERS)
Saltmeadows Rd., GATESHEAD,
TYNE & WEAR NE8 3AH. Note that all remittances MUST be made payable to JOHN JOYCE/ICC ACCOUNT. Price: UK £3.50 post paid. European £4.00 post paid; Australian £4.50 surface mail - £6.50 airmail; US/Canadian £4.00 surface mail - £6.00 airmail. All remittances must be in sterling.

No Crosby admirer can be without this "bible" of Bing's recording career at what is, for its value, a trivial price.

THE ALTERNATE BING CROSBY by Colin Pugh - a skilled analysisof varying 'takes' of Bing's recordings.

PHILCO RADIO TIMES by Lionel Pairpoint - a highly entertaining listing of 104 Crosby radio shows with song titles, guests, patter and extensive notes.

BOTH THESE DESIRABLE PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE FROM THE SECRETARY: £2.50 post paid to UK members and European: US/Can 6 dollars surface mail, 8 dollars airmail; Australian members £4.00 for airmail post and £3.00 for surface mail.

Also from the Secretary, the LP-ography £2.00 post paid; the mini-Discography £2.00 post paid. These last two items are very use ful for 'marking-off' items thereby keeping the hardback listing clean and unmarked!

ARNOLD BAKER, 48 Groomsport Road, Bangor, Co. Down, N. Ireland offers a wide selection of tapes: all John Salisbury's radio programmes (US); Bob Machliss's Australian; rare items, Hawaiian, and seasonal compilations. On good C120 cassettes, usually Sony. Price £3.00 UK post-paid. Open-reel tapes also available Send medium-sized SAE for catalogue of all material available.

MRS. RENEE CHESTER, 48 Milton Road, Hanwell, London, W7 has virtually all Bing's films on video and is generously willing to share with other members. SAE please if writing.

PHIL CLARKE at 150a Hart Plain Aven., Cowplain, Hants, PO8 8QP runs the SOUTHERN BING CROSBY CLUB is also a video expert; meetings now are reduced to twice a year - first Sunday In May and ditto October each year, while Phil recovers from his devastating burglary.
JOHN JOYCE, 21 Birchfield Gardens, Gateshead, Tyne & Wear, and Bob Jones, 39 Gladstone Str., Hebburn, T & W, NE31 2XD organise social functions with records, video, films - and DINNER! Anyone within reach of Gateshead desirous of attending should contact either.

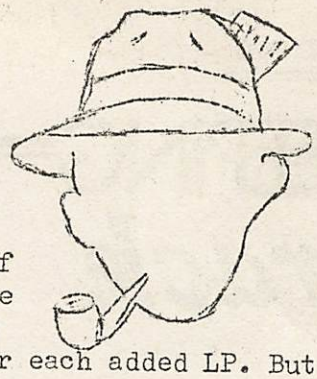
People in Southampton willing to attend a Bing-together should contact JIM NEWELL, 17 Edwina Close, Bitterne, of that town.

In recent issues of BING, DAVID WARD, 51 St. Andrews Str., Lincoln has been inviting members in the EAST MIDLANDS to get in touch with a view to holding get-togethers in that area. He reports, alas, that response has been less than enthusiastic. Nevertheless, he wants to make one more appeal for interest and support.

Members are reminded that items intending for TRADING POST are much easier for the Editor to collate, thus ensuring insertion, if they are written on a separate piece of paper.

We have seen CROSBY CHRONICLE, produced by JOHN MARSHALL, 39 Kings Rd., Teddington, Midd'x, originally an off-shoot, it seemed,of the Bing Crosby Historical Society but now apparently 'independent'. Write to John for details of membership &c.

LEGEND MUSIC



Legend House, 153 Francklyn Gardens, Edgware, Midd'x :

********* Legend Music inform us of what they describe as 'unrepeatable offers'; a persual of the listing shows this must almost certainly be true. All prices shewn are plus post & packing which is: 1 LP 80p; 2 LPs £1.20p plus 35p for each added LP. But maximum postage on any one order is £2.50p.

RADIOLA 1044 Bing, Bob, Dorothy Lamour: Philco show 1947	£4.00
SOUNDTRAK 104 Blue Skies - Bing & Fred Astaire	£4.00
RADIOLA 1033: Andrews Sisters and Bing	£4.00
MAGIC AWE 4: The Andrews Sisters	£1.50
ARTISTIC 001: Bing's Party: 15 nice tracks	£3.25
MAGIC AWE1: Bing's Magic: 16 great tracks	£2.25
MCMM 2839: Bing sings Songs of the Islands	£1.99
MF 7007: Bing's Greatest Hits 2-LP set	£1.99
SUNBEAM 504: Distinctively Bing Vol 2	£4.50
RCA NL 42889: Young Bing Crosby, original cover 12 tracks	£1.99
MF 210: Bing Crosby Sings:Christmas - some great tracks including "1000 Violins", I Can Dream, Baby Its Cold Outside.	£5.00
SPRINGBOARD 4008: Hey Jude, Hey Bing.	only 99p
CBS 35093: Crosby Collection Vol I	£1.75
CBS 35094 Crosby Collection Vol II	£1.75
CBS 35748 Crosby Collection Vol III	
Liberty LOM 16002: Road to Hong Kong soundtrack	£3.75
Reprise MID34013 White Christmas, Bing, Sinatra, Fred Waring	£1.50
Concord Jazz C050 Tribute to Duke Ellington	£1.99
PHILIPS 6641/923 Songs of a Lifetime:Ken Barnes fabulous 2-LP set at low, low price	£2.50
CAPITOL SM 11738 Crosby Classics Vol 1	£1.25
CAPITOL SM 11739 Crosby Classics Vol 2	£1.25
KOALA 14129 Swing with Bing: 10 great tracks	99p
KOALA 14207 You Keep Coming Back Like a Song	£1.25
MCA 177: Shillelaghs & Shamrocks	£1.50
GRAPPENHAUSER 1001: Music, Music, Music 16 nice tracks	£2.50
MAGIC AWE3 : Bing and Friends	£2.50
BBC REB 398: The Final Chapter: Bing's last broadc/t with Alan Dell	£2.99
CBS CL2830: Bing & Paul Whiteman	£4.00
MFP 50249 : Bing Crosby & Buddy Cole "Where the Blue..."	£1.25
UNITED ARTISTS UAS29956 At My Time of Life	99p
UNITED ARTISTS UAK 30115 Golden Age of American Radio - Bing & co.	£1.25
UNITED ARTISTS UAG 30294 Come Share the Wine	£1.50
UNITED ARTISTS UAS29888 Couple of Song & Dance Men, Bing & Fred	£1.25.

And others; send SAE for lists. This represents an oasis in a somewhat barren field! Discerning members may think it worthwhile to get 'spares' at some of the above prices.

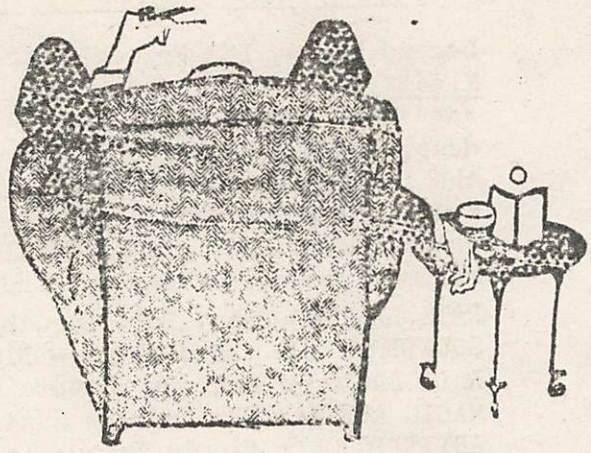
SPECIAL! SPECIAL! SPOKANE 22 GOING HOLLYWOOD VOL 17: limited edition of rare and un-USED soundtrack highlights of Bing films incl. RIPSTITCH THE TAILOR, CONFESSIONS OF A CO-ED, PLEASE, BIG B/C 1932, HOLLYWOOD ON PARADE, RHYTHM ON THE RANGE and others: To order at £7.00 INCLusive of P & P.

This is an American import unlikely to reach even specialist shops, and has, alas, to be reflected in the price. Nevertheless, it should be a collector's dream.

NEW RECORDS -

WHAT THERE ARE.....

KEEPING *track*



On a recent visit to Woolworths I found myself wondering if I had inadvertently stepped into a time machine and found myself 30-40 years back; for there on full display were browsers with such records as THE BEST OF THE INKSPOTS, BEST OF THE MILLS BROS., JUDY GARLAND, DEANNA DURBIN, THE ANDREWS SISTERS HOAGY CARMICHAEL, LOUIS JORDAN - and MR. CROSBY & MR. MERCER! It seemed joyful - and eerie - at the same time! Clearly the EMI-based MUSIC FOR PLEASURE is now taking full advantage of its tie-up with MCA for all of these highly nostalgic - and musical albums are reissues from that label. Tho' the price of MFP has now gone up to £2.25 from £1.99 they still represent a considerable bargain. And it was MFP, you will recall, that is currently exhibiting that FIREHOUSE FIVE + TWO album we enthused about in the previous issue.

And this reminds us, some readers wrote in saying they had bought this album - and the Ambrose 'Hits of 1931' - AND WERE DISAPPOINTED that Bing wasn't on them! While we did indulge in a little "if only..." exercise surely the article clearly indicated these were non Bing records?

RECORDS OF A DIFFERENT
* KIND *

With some dismay, if not consternation, we note we have NOT provided the little box wherein a "X" indicates your subscription is due! We know this is welcomed as a reminder. And without the necessary we'll be sunk without trace. So, though there is no BOX will members note that if a "X" appears on the Contents page it is a reminder to the effect that subs are due with this issue - or shortly after.

As we've indicated, there are Bing records this time but, alas, as is so often the case, they present nothing new to collectors except those who have only recently come in from the cold, as it were, by becoming new and enthusiastic Bing-record buyers.

MFP 50554 (Mono) MR. CROSBY & MR. MERCER
Price: £2.25 or thereabouts.

A reissue of the MCA Coral 'Rainbow' album, page 126 of the LP-ography. Songs of which Johnny Mercer wrote the lyrics and duetted with Bing on two of them. The album also offers Jane Wyman, Connee Boswell, Bob Crosby, Mary Martin, Jack Teagarden and Jimmy Dorsey - a galaxy in itself. This issue does offer new sleeve notes, accurate and interesting - by one Stan Britt. MR. GALLAGHER & MR. SHEAN is on it and remains one of the best-ever duets for swing, jazz, ad-libbing, humour - - and sheer verve. It also offers perhaps the most appealing photograph of Bing.

KARUSSELL: Stars & Schlager: Stereo 2872217: THAT OLD FEELING: DOPPEL STAR: Louis Armstrong and Bing Crosby Price £3.99.

This album is of German origin, and some of the series it offers have been distributed in Britain. Only the titles of the songs are in English and, once more, although a novel record combining as it does the talents of two of the "greats" offers nothing new - unless, of course, some of Satchmo's songs are new to you and desirable. Apart from the songs Bing sings there is just one small item on the sleeve which tells us it is Polydor - or Phonogram. The songs from Bing are culled from the SEASONS album (Polydor 2442 15) viz:

Yesterday, When I was Young
In the Good, old Summertime
Seasons
On the Very first Day of the Year
Summer Wind
September Song

Bing's last recorded comecial tracks which are surely in the possession of all members. The sleeve is exceptionally colourful being a fairly vivid mixture of green and dark blue with a picture each of Bing and Louis. Nothing to go out of your way for but indicating that Bing is probably still a 'seller' in Germany. Incidentally, the sleeve contains details of other records available in this series,one of which I would particularly like. I ordered it from the shop which supplied this Bing/Louis record and the reply came back; UNOBTAINABLE. Thus the marketing methods of today. No wonder the record firms are folding up. I should, perhaps, make it clear that the Bing/Louis tracks are quite separate and NOT duets - and, Louis's are mainly vocal and not trumpet showpieces.

RCA International INTS 5210: VAL SINGS BING VAL DOONICAN Price £3.99

No need here to emphasise this is a NON-BING record! So far as we can recall, this is the third sung tribute to Bing on record, following J.J.Barrie's FAREWELL BING, and Perry Como's sterling effort on one of his recent albums mentioned here.

Val Doonican, with a big reputation herefor his voice and his easy-going personality, follows up his well-received TV tribute to Mr. Crosby with this album of Crosby favourites. If you like Val you will, clearly, like this album but we feel Vic Damone must have got rather carried away in his brief contribution to the sleeve notes when he wrote among other things:

"He is the closest man I have ever heard to sound like Bing Crosby...." in reference to Val Doonican's singing.

Hmmmm..... Val himself wrote on the sleeve, something that confounds those who say "there is nothing new to say about Bing". Val comes up with this gem:

"...presenting a forty-five minute show (of Bing Crosby) was a bit like choosing one bottle of wine from the world's richest cellar...."

Congratulations Val. Highly original - and telling.

The titles sung by Val are:
POCKETFUL OF DREAM MEDLEY:
Pocketful of Dreams
Meet the Sun Half-way.
Sing a song of Sunbeams
TRUE LOVE
AC-CEN-TCHU-ATE-THE POSITIVE
MOONLIGHT BECOMES YOU
MISSISSIPPI MUD
THAT SLY OLD GENTLEMAN
MAY I?
BEAUTIFUL DREAMER
DEAR HEARTS & GENTLE PEOPLE

(Cont. over

IRISH LULLABY (Too-Ra-loo-ra-loo-ra)
SWINGING ON A STAR

LAZY MEDLEY:
Lazy
Gone Fishin'
Small Fry
Lazybones.

The front of the sleeve has a head-and-shoulders of Val wearing a Bing-type hat, complete with golf badge, and holding a pipe. On the rear of the sleeve is a black-and-white picture of Bing and Val on a golf-course.

The arrangements owe nothing at all to John Scott Trotter, Victor Young &c and are what might be called modern - but not modern enough to be poor taste. DEAR HEARTS has a particularly good arrangement in what is, I suppose, current Country & Western style complete with steel guitar solo. Actually, the musicianship is good all the way- and of course, it would be stupid, perhaps churlish, to deny that Val sings beautifully throughout. I enjoy the album very much indeed and it constitutes a fine tribute to Bing.

One further word; you will note that - as in the TV show - LAZYBONES is included as a Crosby favourite. Yet as we remarked, Bing never recorded this song commercially even if he sang it on the radio. Unlike all the other songs, this certainly was never closely associated with Bing. A curious error.

MGM (Import) — PENNIES FROM HEAVEN — No no.

The copy of this record I've seen bears a white stick-on label saying it is a WEA IMPORT NO. K11606. The record - a doubler - consists of a curious mixture of old/new arrangements of old songs. Members may have seen the Dennis Potter TV show a couple of years back of this title when a salesman lived out his life in a fantasy based on popular songs of the day - the 30's actually. Hollywood has now made it into a multi-million-dollar musical film. Included is Bing's actual recording (by permission of Columbia Records, it says) of DID YOU EVER SEE A DREAM WALKING? So it seems that we will actually hear Bing on the soundtrack when the film arrives here.

Getting back to the quiz in this issue and its answers (see pages 29-30) the six million-sellers to add to the 16 in the quiz are:

San Antonio Rose (1941)
I'll Be Home for Christmas (1943)
Sunday, Monday or Always (1943)
Merry Christmas album (1947)
Dear Hearts & Gentle People (1949)
South America, Take It Away (1947)

SILENT NIGHT is certainly a multi-million seller which is not listed because the publishers of the authority consulted could not get authenticated sales figures from Decca. Perhaps this was due to the fact that Bing signed away all royalties to charity. Some modern disc journalists should bear in mind - when they are talking about modern million-sellers - that they invariably award three gold discs if a record, for example, sells 3-million. Applied to Bing's sales this would immediately mean 30 gold discs for WHITE CHRISTMAS and goodness knows how many for his other multi-million-selling records. The album WHITE CHRISTMAS would certainly be in this category. Up to the late '60's this collection was selling more than 200,000 annually.

Perhaps the most striking statistic to enable one to get the change in record buying into perspective is to consider (again, according to the authority we consulted which admits it was often in uncharted waters) that in 1937 when Bing did SWEET LEILANI, there were only three other million-sellers! In 1965 there were sixty-two.....
(Excuse queer word on previous page: should re "Bing's ..<u>commercial</u>...

Before leaving KEEPING TRACK we feel, after further hearings, that a postscript is appropriate on VAL SINGS BING lest we have been less than fair on what is really a highly musical and sincere tribute to Bing. Unlike Vic Damone we can never hear Val like Bing; Mike Holliday fooled us on one celebrated occasion; Dick Todd early on reminded us irresistibly of the earlier Bing. Similarly, much as we can enjoy Perry Como he could never be remotely mistaken for Bing. With the possible exception of Mike Holliday, on certain songs, always there is a basic difference in timbre, vibrato, and pitch and these, of course, are the qualities which make the Crosby voice unique in its truest sense. And we haven't even mentioned diction and phrasing.

None of this, however, precludes Val from being a good, quality, singer - as indeed, are the others. On this album, perhaps because of his Irish-ness, Val is particularly good on TOO-RA-LOO-RA-LOO-RAL which he performs with great sincerity and appeal. In the up-tempo treatment of ACCENTUATE THE POSITIVE (ignoring the phonetic spelling!) the accompaniment includes a new electronic device we hear increasingly on modern recordings. It can only be described as resembling the whine of a rifle bullet as heard in American Western films! If this sounds eccentric, listen and give us a better description!

Dick Nettleton and other collectors of "Bing in Lyrics" will be interested to know that in SONG OF SUNBEAMS Val and his chorus, sing "AND SWING LIKE BING". TRUE LOVE and GONE FISHIN', accepted as eternally Crosby duets, are sung by Val solo.

We feel we have been more just now to what is really a nice album to have on the shelf.

I had a letter from a gentlemen hitherto unknown to me saying he was attempting to write a book on the song stylists and requesting some information on Crosby songs. His letter included the following:

'..one track which is worth its weight in gold. Forty-six years ago I thought I CAN'T ESCAPE FROM YOU was the greatest ballad I'd ever heard. I still think so. What a delightful song!'

Now if you refer back to DISCROSBY in this issue, or if you still have it in mind, you must agree that this constitutes quite a remarkable coincidence. DISCROSBY, needless to say, was written some time before this letter arrived.

BING ON THE BOX: Apart from the showing of STAGECOACH on TV, already referred to, it was a pleasure to see that Bing was used to introduce the farewell round-up of Parkinson Shows on BBC TV. He opened the programme singing HELLO, PARKY! to the tune of HELLO DOLLY! and later on, persuaded Parkinson (as we well remember) to join him in a brief duet of THE PLEASURE OF YOUR COMPANY. A family bereavement, taking us away from home over the period, prevented us from noting any May 2nd tributes to Bing this year. No doubt they occurred?

On Radio-2 BBC was THE GOLDEN AGE OF HOLLYWOOD presented 1943 PARAMOUNT Fittingly, Bing had the lion's share of the programme and we heard James Mason talking of the importance of the ROAD films to Paramount - and he stressed that Bing films were No. 1 at the box-office from 1944-49.

BING CROSBY HISTORICAL SOCIETY

DISQUIETING REPORTS FROM TACOMA

Members are now well aware of the BCHS under the presidency of good friend KEN TWISS and its laudable aims of preserving Bing's memory in highly practical ways. The acquisition of his birthplace, for example, when it falls vacant. The Society held yet another function on Bing's birthday at the Harvester Restaurant on May 2nd. Bing's sister, Mary Rose, has accepted the vice-Presidency of the Society - which is the good news. And the society has also got the services of the past-President of the Pacific Lutheran University, Eugene Wiegman as fund-raiser for the Society - the foundation will raise money for youngsters at Mary Bridge Childrens' Health Centre with heart problems.

Less happy news, however, is contained in some newspaper reports we have received. THE NEWS TRIBUTE of April 29 last carried the following:

"AUCTION UPSETS BING'S LOCAL FANS

Everything from Bing Crosby's golf clubs to the walls of the late entertainer's Paramount Studios dressing-room will go on the auction block next month. His widow Kathryn says the event will be a 'celebration for the people who loved Bing'. Ken Twiss says it will be a pity.

The wife of the Tacoma-born actor-recording artist has announced plans to auction off thousands of pieces of art work, clothing, trophies and show business memorabilia that once belonged to Crosby.

Twiss, president of the Tacoma's Bing Crosby Historical Society, is still hoping Mrs. Crosby will donate something to his organisation, but he isn't holding his breath.

'Kathryn has a perfect right to do what she wants with Bing's things,' he said. 'She says she is disposing of them to friends. But once they're sold to individuals, they'll be scattered to the winds. It would be next to impossible to get them together again.

Crosby, who was 73, died while golfing in Spain in 1977. The historical society was formed the following year. Its headquarters at 1127 Broadway Plaza abound with Crosby sheet-music and records, but Twiss and other members have been able to locate few items that actually belonged to Tacoma's most famous native son.

The society does have books from Crosby's library, a golf cap, and a pair of the singer's trousers.

The auction will take place May 25-27 at the San Francisco Gallery of Butterfield & Butterfield.

Crosby's widow calls the event a 'garage sale' designed to clean out six houses the singer owned.

TWISS BLANCHED WHEN HE LEARNED SHE DECIDED NOT TO GIVE ANYTHING IN THE WAY OF MEMENTOES TO MUSEUMS BECAUSE 'MUSEUMS AREN'T REALLY ALIVE'.

"I THINK SHE'S DOING AN INJUSTICE TO US," SAID TWISS.

He said the society envisioned creating a modern museum to display Crosby memorabilia.
"Its something that could be changed all the time," he added. "People from around the world would go there to see Bing's things."

TWISS SAID THE SOCIETY'S RELATIONSHIP WITH MRS. CROSBY IS STRAINED AT BEST.

"There's no way we can get in touch with her," he said. "WE'VE BEEN TRYING FOR OVER A YEAR. SHE WON'T EVEN ANSWER OUR LETTERS.
"WE'VE HAD CONTACT WITH HER AT VARIOUS TIMES, BUT SOMEHOW SHE DOESN'T RECOGNISE US ANY MORE," HE CONTINUED. "WE GOT A LETTER FROM HER STATING WE COULDN'T RAISE FUNDS IN BING'S NAME. I HAD ASKED HER TO BE HONORARY CHAIRMAN OF OUR BOARD. SHE SAID IT WASN'T PROPER AT THIS TIME."

"MUSEUMS AREN'T REALLY ALIVE" said Mrs. Crosby, and this must be an inspired piece of eccentric thinking, dismissing as it does - in her view - some of the world's most famous and interesting institutions.

Bearing in mind that Bing himself, though having no need of 'fan' clubs was nevertheless always the essence of courtesy and friendliness to the members - witness his unfailing courtesy in Britain; and bearing in mind also what happened when a medallion based on the Palladium plaque was projected here in Britain, we can only realise with a chill that affairs Crosby are indeed "under new management".

We feel particularly strongly for KEN TWISS because:
(a) his devotion to Bing and his memory is utterly sincere
(b) is entirely altruistic, and
(c) is certainly voluntary in his efforts, indeed struggles, in the aims of the Society he founded.

One wonders, too, in view of her belief that museums are inanimate - as indeed they are, why she bothered to attend the Gonzaga unveiling. Nothing is more inanimate than a statue. But, and it is an important but, that statue, like any projected museum, is a respected and honourable indication of the feelings Bing generated in a full and pleasure-GIVING career. On the same lines, we cannot help wondering what differing form those precious belongings of Bing's will assume when they are scattered far and wide in private hands rather than reposing in a museum, or a Hall of Memory? The main difference that we can see is that in the former instance they will have been sold - to the highest bidder.

It seems quite astonishing, to put it at its mildest, that far from getting help, encouragement and enthusiasm from the very quarter KEN TWISS and his colleagues might expect it they get only rebuffs and what appears to be even a degree of hostility. Almost as if, far from preserving Bing's memory there was a desire to erase it.

THAT AT LEAST, IS AN IMPOSSIBLE EXERCISE FOR ANYONE TO UNDERTAKE.

THE SOCIETY, the address of which is BING CROSBY HISTORICAL SOCIETY, P.O. BOX 8013, TACOMA, WASHINGTON, 98408, USA always appreciates donations towards its worthy efforts. Membership costs 10 dollars; it issues a regular Newsletter, keeping members abreast of activities and progress.

WHAT BING WAS SAYING IN 1954:

From a musical paper article. of Jan. 1954 *****

BING WANTS TO GO STRAIGHT!

The man who is probably the best-loved singer of all time claims he is a prisoner to his tonsils.

"With limburger they expect a smell, and with Crosby, a song. So I give 'em what they want, but I'm getting more of what I want myself, too." So says Bing.

Thro' that dollar-hard philosophy runs a thread of complaint. For Bing likes to play drama and hopes to do more of it.
In LITTLE BOY LOST he sang only two tunes which were part of the plot. Otherwise this was a straight part - and a tense one at that.

"I like drama because it has a future for me," says Crosby. "Long after my voice begins to sound like good old St. Nick's I'll still be able to act. Being typed as a musical star limits a guy's horizon and opportunities, too. I'm wide open for almost anything now."

But don't sigh too soon, you Crosby fans. There is no immediate intention of silencing the Crosby chords. In WHITE CHRISTMAS he does many of the 12 new Irving Berlin tunes. And this year he will probably do ROAD TO THE MOON with Bob Hope. It would be a long and lonely road without a song or two.

Crosby will even sing in THE COUNTRY GIRL. He will play a musical comedy performer to enable him to work fresh songs. Possibly Bing made so many friends in his early screen days because he played himself most of the time.

"But," he contends, "I'm learning to act. In LITTLE BOY LOST I didn't play me!" One day he hopes to do an un-musical.

"But I have a hard time convincing my bosses that they ought to give me a picture without a song. I'm sure if they cast me as a deep-sea diver they'd find an excuse for me to yodel!"

Nevertheless, although Old Man Crosby may be looking for excuses to retire from the full-time singing scene on the strength of his acting, his advice to young singers will be listened to in reverent silence.

"Sing with a band, kids," says Crosby. "Good instrumentalists can help an ambitious vocalist. Another benefit is facing the public constantly. And, of course, if he's with a good orchestra the singer is automatically heard on radio programmes and records and this helps him to establish an identity."

Bing's large and varied record collection of pops and classics contains the entire output of one singer which are filed away and never played. "They're my own," he grins. "Somewhere in the house in Holmsby Hills, or in the Hollywood office, or at the ranch, I have every record I ever made. Why should I play them? They'd be pretty dull stuff to me."

He keeps them because his business advisers feel they might come in handy at some future date. All told, he has grooved close on 900 songs since he first faced a recording mike in 1926.

"I like anything with a melody, and some feeling, or with a beat. I really go for good Dixieland and New Orleans jazz," said Bing - and note the subtle distinction made by the erudite Bing.

"Among the pop vocalists, I'm a devotee of Ella Fitzgerald and Perry Como." And he goes, too, for ballet music and the lighter symphonies.

"None of my stuff is indexed," said Bing. "In fact, I don't even know whether certain records are in town, at the ranch or goodness knows where."

Editor: This, we repeat, was 1954. And sadly, we all know now what happened to them. They were knocked-down to the highest bidder! In May, 1982.